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**SOCIAL PRESSURE AND HOW  
CONFLICTED MASCULINITIES  
CONSTRUCT A BALANCED-SELF  
THROUGH MONOSOCIAL,  
HETEROSOCIAL AND HOMOSOCIAL  
SPA CONSUMPTION**

EDITA PETRYLAITE

PhD

2014

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SPA CONSUMPTION**

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of the requirements of the University of  
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## **Abstract**

This study investigates male consumer behaviour in the spa consumption context. With increasing attention to physical appearance in the postmodern era, contemporary men are becoming an appropriate focus for the attention of the beauty and wellbeing industries. Nevertheless, men's body aestheticization and wellbeing practices have rarely been the topic of academic discussion in the marketing field. Hence, this study unveils the rationale behind male customers' decisions to consume various spa services, known as enhancers of physical appearance and wellbeing.

The context of spa consumption has been selected purposely in this study. In Britain, the spa industry has extended its scope beyond the healing properties which were originally at its core. It now provides a richer experience by offering relaxing and beautifying services in luxury ambience. Although it has gained a global reputation as a profitable business, in the North East of England this lucrative industry struggles to attract the attention of the male market segment. By exploring male spa consumption experiences through the lens of gender, this study answers the question: how do current perceptions of masculinity impact upon male purchasing decisions.

Men's multiple perspectives have been gathered through a qualitative approach, using interpretivism and symbolic interactionism as the general theoretical underpinnings and grounded theory as its research methodology. 14 semi-structured interviews and memos written to enhance analytical thinking reveal that aesthetic and wellbeing practices are seen as a feminine concern. Male spa customers face stigmatisation for doing their gender differently. This explains why spas form a less important aspect of male leisure consumption in the North East. Despite apparently more liberal gender norms in contemporary Britain, the spa industry in this part of the country remains a gendered product. Men envisage and consume spas predominantly as a by-product of other businesses or as a primary product but under specific conditions. Therefore, they construct conflicted masculinities as a result of this.

This PhD study bridges the gap in current perceptions of masculinity that have been overlooked by marketing scholarship. The derived theory of social pressure, created by sociocultural norms and the media, reveals a great deal of tension in the experiences of male spa consumers when constructing a balanced-self for self-centred and socially-centred reasons. Thus, it serves as a starting point for the spa industry in preparing appropriate strategies to become an attractive and appropriate male leisure space for men's monosocial, heterosocial and homosocial consumption.

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# Declaration

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others. Any ethical clearance for the research presented in this thesis has been approved. Approval has been sought and granted by the Faculty Ethics Committee on 24/05/2012

I declare that the Word Count of this Thesis is 88, 906 words.

Name: Edita Petrylaite

Signature:

Date:

# Chapter 1: Introduction

---

Today, many consumers construct their identities through material possessions and a chosen lifestyle. Lifestyle practices, in the view of Brownlie and Hower (2011), contribute to energising consumer capitalism. This is in agreement with the literature of consumer culture, which presents contemporary society as consumption orientated and highly preoccupied with aestheticism (Featherstone, 2007; Jameson, 1993; Schroeder and Zwick, 2004).

A view exists that the aestheticization of life started with postmodernism, which began its journey in the second half of the twentieth century and embraced many cultural and social spheres of life (Featherstone, 2007; Jameson, 1993; Woods, 1999). Postmodernism has created opportunities for aesthetic production and consumption by diminishing the distinction between art and reality, and between high and mass culture (Featherstone, 2007). In addition, economic stability and the eagerness to acquire new-fangled goods have led towards aesthetic innovation and experimentation (Jameson, 1993). Furthermore, accessibility of new styles and fashions have promoted personality and emphasised the expression of the self through body maintenance and grooming activities (Featherstone, 2007). Goods became the symbols of status, wealth and prestige, and a bridge to the accomplishment of consumer dreams and fantasies (Featherstone, 2007; Venkatesh and Meamber, 2006).

Even though changes have affected both genders in the postmodern era, the male consumer market has been shaped the most. If during this time women experienced changes mainly on the levels of financial stability and independence, men shifted their attention from breadwinning and competitive behaviour to enhancing their physical looks through more explicit grooming (McNeill and Douglas, 2011). It can be argued that the cultural movement of postmodernism, by placing paramount importance on physical attractiveness, induced the evolvement in the perceptions of masculinity and male consumption practices.

## 1.1 Masculinity

The concept of masculinity outlines behaviour typically associated with men. Scholars highlight the social side and multiplicity, as prevalent characteristics of masculinity (Benwell, 2003; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Edwards, 2006; McDowell, 2005;



Tuncay, 2006; Tuncay Zayer and Otnes, 2012). For instance, it has been defined by academics as a social construct, which develops through relationships with women, as well as other men (Benwell, 2003; Connell, 2000; McDowell, 2005). In addition, masculinity has been presented as never being the same, hence being multiple. It depends on such factors as race, sexuality and class (Benwell, 2003), is constructed in specific historic and cultural settings, and thus, has a tendency to change because the aforementioned aspects are subject to transformation (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Therefore, changes in a specific sociocultural environment mark a transformation in the perceptions of masculinity and male gender roles.

The notion of gender roles has been a popular topic in the literature of sociology and psychology particularly in the previous century. It had already attracted the attention of scholars in the 1970s. According to O'Neil (1981), in the 70s and 80s it had been recognised that gender role socialisation creates conflict. At this point, the sex role theory explained the behaviour of males and females as predetermined by the roles ascribed to each gender within social structures. The expected specific behaviour and characteristics, explicitly appropriate for men and women, have been learnt and acquired respectively through socialisation (Hofstede, 1984; Levant and Pollack, 1995; Nelson and Vilela, 2012). Family, peer networks, education, church, sport and work were among those social institutions, which contributed to this process. As gender literature outlines, it has been commonly perceived that the role of women was to look after the domestic environment, while men's responsibility was to be a financial provider, and hence, mainly performed and learnt in the public arena (Firat, 1994).

### **1.1.1 Hegemonic masculinity**

Breadwinning has commonly been assigned to the activities closely related to the hegemonic type of masculinity. The latter concept was proposed by Connell in the late 1980s and since then has become a popular term in many research fields, starting with sociology (Adams, Anderson and McCormack, 2010; Davis, 2002; Dean, 2013; Hall *et al.* 2012, etc.), sport (Grindstaff and West, 2011; Næss, 2010; Pringle, 2005), consumer research (Avery, 2012; Patterson and Elliott, 2002), not to mention others. As the scholarship from both the last and current centuries suggests, hegemonic masculinity has been established as the legitimate model of masculinity, constructing its supremacy by subordinating women and marginalising other less popular masculinities if they differed in terms of their social status, age, race or sexuality (Connell, 2000; Cornwall and Lindisfarne, 1994a, b; van Hoven and Hörschelmann,

2005). This also applies to men that transcend the heteronormative male gender boundaries by pursuing the body beautiful (Woodruffe-Burton and Ireland, 2012) through practices of body aestheticization.

### **1.1.2 New conceptualisations of masculinity**

The emerging new conceptualisations of masculinity in the 1980s and 1990s fell outside conventional perceptions of masculine norms (Iida, 2005; Tuncay, 2006; Tuncay Zayer and Neier, 2011). The new male gender ideals, such as the New Man and the metrosexual placed an emphasis on the beauty aspect in the construction of identities rather than competition, physical strength, endurance and power – the traits closely associated with the standards of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2000; Grindstaff and West, 2011).

The New Man, promoted by the media in the 1980s, is a complete contradiction to the hegemonic man, complying with the traditional male gender norms. The New Man stood out from the above mentioned types of men with his sensitivity and nurturing activities (Cornwall and Lindisfarne, 1994b; Pompper, 2010) as well as his interest in fashion (Craik, 1993; Edwards, 2003). Apparel purchasing became an important activity in the life of this man by contributing to the construction of the self (Crane, 2000; Woodruffe-Burton, 1998).

Another type of masculinity, called the “*metrosexual*”, emerged in the mid-90s and has been associated with the young male, concerned about his immaculate body appearance. The contemporary metrosexual male, identified by Simpson (1994), meets all the characteristics of the typical postmodern consumer, mentioned by Featherstone (2007). He engages in grooming and styling, and presents himself as a narcissist. The concern about improving one’s image and cultural status, according to Kaye (2009), are the main reasons why the metrosexual takes intensive care of his body, and chooses commodities and services that can aesthetically improve his body’s outlook.

### **1.1.3 Men’s growing interest in grooming**

Nevertheless, the phenomenon of male body beautification is not limited to the New Man or the metrosexual. There is evidence to suggest that men in general are becoming more aesthetically conscious, and this trend, as Iida (2005) suggests, is the

outcome of two influences – the “feminisation of culture” and postmodernism, which encouraged the transformation of human bodies “into visible representational surfaces” (Iida, 2005, p. 56).

The evidence of men’s interest in improving their body image has been witnessed by a number of scholars. For instance, over the years, the literature of consumer behaviour and gender looked at new ways of male grooming, starting with the use of cosmetics (Hall, Gough and Seymour-Smith, 2012; Harrison, 2008; Souiden and Diagne, 2009; Tuncay and Otnes, 2008), hair styling in salons (Barber, 2008), shopping for clothes (Craik, 1993; Crane, 2000; Otnes and McGrath, 2001; Woodruffe-Burton, 1998), depilating the body (Boroughs, Cafri and Thompson, 2005; Castelo-Branco, Huezo and Lagarda, 2008; Martins, Tiggemann and Churchett, 2008) or even agreeing or contemplating on becoming the patients of cosmetic interventions (Atkinson, 2006; Davis, 2002; Ricciardelli and Clow, 2009; Ricciardelli and White, 2011).

It has been outlined that although physical appearance is taking a more profound meaning in men’s lives, male consumers still hesitate to accept new ways of looking after their bodies due to a highly entrenched perception that practices containing a beauty aspect are still highly associated with femininity and gay men. Such a view pertains not only in the perspective of males, but also in the whole of society (Barber, 2008; Davis, 2002; Iida, 2005; Kimmel and Tissier-Desbordes, 2000; McNeill and Douglas, 2011; Tuncay Zayer and Neier, 2011; Tuncay and Otnes, 2008).

The mainstream of scholarly sources exploring the phenomenon of male body aestheticization primarily comes from the field of sociology. Only a handful of studies in consumer research were interested in delivering insight into men’s motives for intensive grooming. For instance, at the turn of the twenty-first century this was initiated by Woodruffe-Burton (1998), who aimed to examine men’s relationship with fashion shopping, which appeared to be of a compensatory nature. A couple of years later, Kimmel and Tissier-Desbordes (2000) found out that the acquisition of cosmetics in general does not have significant importance in the lives of American and French men, as it is widely regarded to be the area of women. More recently, Tuncay solely and in collaboration with other researchers has explored the grooming nuances of the market segment of young and urban heterosexual males. For instance, in her solitary study Tuncay (2006) aimed to shed more light onto the discourses of masculinity from the metrosexual shoppers’ perspective. Later, Tuncay and Otnes (2008) published an

insight into sentry strategies the urban heterosexual men shoppers employ when acquiring fashion and grooming products in the market place.

In addition, Souiden and Diagne (2009) investigated how personal, sociocultural and marketing variables affect men's purchasing decisions of cosmetics. Finally, a study by McNeill and Douglas (2011) was interested in men's motives for such practices and aimed to bring more knowledge into how masculine identities are constructed today in the cultural context of New Zealand. These are the sources from the field of marketing that looked deeper into men's motives for engaging in activities that can enhance one's physical appearance.

## **1.2 Research background**

There is evidence to suggest that investment in physical appearance and health by UK men is significant. For example, it has been reported that men are becoming increasingly concerned about their physical appearance, with 86% of male respondents using moisturiser on a regular basis (Euromonitor International, 2013) and in general spending more money on personal care products (i.e. hair gel, shower gel, deodorants, shampoo and aftershaves). Based on the results of a survey, in the UK, sales in men's toiletries soared from £530 million in 2008 to £590 million in 2013, with an expected growth of up to £636 million by 2018 (Mintel, 2013).

In addition, more men are keen to preserve their good looks by regularly attending health and wellbeing centres. Mintel (2014) reports that in the period of 2012 to 2013 the use of leisure centres and swimming pools in the UK, where the majority of clients are males, rose steadily by 2% in daily visits and by 1% in the group of consumers that visit such centres at least once a week.

According to the survey, carried out by Opinion Research, one in seven men beautify their bodies with feminine products, such as eyeliners, fake tan or mask their imperfections with other cosmetic products. Male respondents admit to using make up, with 26% doing that on a weekly basis and 13% daily (Olins, 2010). Furthermore, the trend of male body beautification is not exclusive to Western cultures. In China, due to changes in lifestyles and increasing income, men are more confident in purchasing pre-shave cosmetics and aftershaves for skincare benefits (Market Research, 2014).

The results of market research are similar to the view of scholars from the field of consumer culture, behaviour and gender studies. It appears that in general men's interest in the way they look is growing globally. The geographical amplitude of undertaken research, which investigates men's attitude to and reasons for body aestheticization, stretches to New Zealand (McNeil and Douglas, 2011), United States (Tuncay, 2006; Tuncay and Otnes, 2008), Japan (Iida, 2005), Malaysia (Cheng, Ooi and Ting, 2010), Canada (Ricciardelli, 2011; Ricciardelli and Clow, 2009; Ricciardelli and White, 2011; Souiden and Diagne, 2009), not to mention the European continent, with France (Kimmel and Tissier-Desbordes, 2000; Souiden and Diagne, 2009) and the United Kingdom (Hall, Gough and Seymour-Smith, 2013; Hall, Gough and Seymour-Smith, 2012; Woodruffe-Burton, 1998) being the most popular states.

Despite the above mentioned evidence, the behaviour of contemporary males in relation to their motives for enhancing their visual presentation remains underexplored in the marketing literature. This gives impetus to investigate men's current consumption habits through the lens of gender. Such an approach will be employed in this doctoral study because of the apparent cohesion between gender and consumer behaviour. This connection has already been mentioned in the work of a few scholars. According to Costa (1994b), culture, which consists of customs, traditions, behaviours, morals and values, has an effect on the way consumers behave. The results of more recent research support this theoretical underpinning. A group of scholars suggests that gender is one of the focal points, which makes consumers act in the way it is perceived appropriate for each gender (Avery, 2012; Davis, Lang and San Diego, 2014; Tuncay, 2006). For example, men tend to resist gender bending brands, in order to protect their masculine image (Avery, 2012) or opt for online shopping, whilst women prefer offline purchasing (Davis, Lang and San Diego, 2014).

Similarly, in the organisational context gender also takes the position of the core category, affecting how organisations have been managed in the past and today (Mathieu, 2009). A number of scholars shone a light on the management style in organisations as containing masculine features or being sex-role stereotyped (Mavin, 2009; Patterson, Mavin and Turner, 2012). Sufficient evidence suggests that today organisations are still run by adopting the model of hegemonic masculinity. For example, men are exposed to job loss if they choose to exercise their right to take a paternity leave, given that the domestic sphere is still prevalently perceived as an area of women (Murgia and Poggio, 2013). It can be argued that organisational cultures are masculine, because the top management positions are still very much shared by men

(Billing, 2011; Bryans and Mavin, 2003; Cameron and Nadler, 2013). Thus, by doing gender differently (Mavin and Grandy, 2012, 2013) both men and women can become the objects of stigma or marginalisation.

### **1.3 Context of study**

The notion of doing gender differently (Mavin and Grandy, 2012, 2013) applies to the context of spa consumption among male spa customers. In general, men's pursuit of the body beautiful (Woodruffe-Burton and Ireland, 2012) through the acquisition of services and products that can enhance physical looks has been perceived to be unconventional. Nevertheless, a group of scholars asserts that this was not the case in the past. Men engaged in maintaining their wellbeing and the attractiveness of their physical body already in Greek and Roman civilisations (Foucault, 1984; Larrinaga, 2005; Lomine, 2005). Yet, the aforementioned activities slowly became remote from male gender and have been perceived to be uncommon practices until recently.

As market research suggests, men are becoming more comfortable in improving their physical appearance and health and are often found to be the constant users of many products and services provided by the beauty and wellbeing industries. One such lucrative business is the deluxe spa. The context of spa consumption has been selected purposely in this study. It is one of the industries that offer a variety of services enhancing one's physical attractiveness and wellbeing.

Today, the spa has grown into an industry that has stretched further away from its roots. If in the past, the word "spa" was mainly associated with healthiness and curative properties, and its customers sought services for healing purposes, today spas can offer more than that or in many cases other things apart from treating physical impairment. This is consistent with what Tabacchi (2010) outlined in her analytical paper on the trends of the spa industry. According to her, until the 1970s spas were catering for the wellness needs of their customers and at the turn of the century it changed profoundly. Now the business of spas predominantly focuses on enriching customer experiences rather than health. Spas are mainly operated by offering an oasis where consumers can immerse themselves into a world of tranquillity and find peace and stability away from stress and the hurdles of everyday life. Today, this type of business has more to do with psychological than physical wellbeing.

A similar notion was found in the work of Koh, Yoo and Boger Jr (2010). In their view, the concept of the spa has broadened its meaning by offering not only healing and rehabilitation but also relaxation, pleasure and socialisation. In accordance with this notion, Klick and Stratmann (2008) explained this new trend as being determined by specific geographical distribution. According to Klick and Stratman (2008), since the twentieth century Britain has focused on developing a leisure aspect in spa tourism, while the rest of Europe have maintained the classical idea of spas that are designed primarily for medical benefits.

Nowadays, in comparison to the past, a spa has developed into many more business models, and this tendency is witnessed by the names we hear today – day spas, hotel spas, resort spas, medical spas, destination spas, etc. (Smith and Puzcko, 2009; Tabacchi, 2010). Nevertheless, health and wellness have not completely disappeared from the aims of this business, because the core spa consumers, as Tabacchi (2010) suggests, still envisage a spa as the place for restoring health and wellbeing. In other words, these type of customers value services that can connect mind, body and spirit.

Despite the positive properties that the spa business is offering and the profit it makes (for example, in 2007 the value of the UK health and beauty segment was approximately \$3 billion) (Mintel, 2007), it has been underexplored. It concerns not only the literature of hospitality, where to date spas as tourism destinations have received scarce attention (Koh, Yoo and Boger Jr, 2010). The same situation persists in the field of marketing and consumer behaviour where spa consumption trends have been neglected by scholarly investigations. Recently, Nilsen (2013) explored how spa experiences are linked to body ideals from the perspective of managers/therapists and consumers. Chang and Beise-Zee (2013) and Medina-Muñoz and Medina-Muñoz (2013) have investigated the conceptualisations of wellness from the tourism and marketing perspective. For instance, Chang and Beise-Zee (2013) contributed to tourism and marketing literature by proposing more up-to-date customer segmentation related to Chinese hot spring resorts. Based on their health perceptions, hot spring visitors have been attributed to four clusters – self-pampering lovers, simple life advocates, sceptics and naïve believers (Chang and Beise-Zee, 2013). This is an addition to the available typology of spa consumers.

Previously, Mintel (2007) identified the UK spa and health customers as seekers (i.e. seeking luxury, exclusivity and good value for money), conformists (i.e. visiting spas for stress relief) and independents (i.e. the most health-focused as looking for new ways of

improving their lives). In addition, Tabacchi (2010) attributed the United States spa visitors into peripheral consumers (as focused on beauty, pampering and pleasure), midlevel consumers (as traditionalists who express a preference for massages and facials) and core spa consumers (as believing in the unity of mind, body and spirit, achieved through engagement in spa services). Further, research into Greece spa tourism, offered a more simplistic profile of spa attendees that are classic and modern spa users, with the former type of clients taking visits to spas for therapeutic reasons, while the latter type is more interested in wellness and relaxation (Beriatos and Papageorgiou, 2009).

Another available study in the area of tourism and marketing by Medina-Muñoz and Medina-Muñoz (2013) was interested in what conditions and attributes create wellness. It has been found that wellness motivation is an important criterion when choosing a wellness destination as well as wellness settings (hotels and destination). Empirical evidence suggests that gender perceptions of wellness diverge. While men during wellness holidays improve their wellbeing through sport activities and attendance of gym facilities, women prefer relaxation and body care (Medina-Muñoz and Medina-Muñoz, 2013).

## **1.4 Research rationale**

Women have been known as the core clientele of spa services for many years. Nonetheless, with the growing number of men visiting contemporary spas it becomes essential to bridge the existing gap into the motives of the male market segment for undertaking various activities in spas across the North East of England. As today males comprise one third of all spa clientele (Bowden, 2009; Mintel, 2007), and in some countries it even reaches 40% of all spa consumers (Smith and Puczko, 2009), it is essential to monitor the key reasons of this market segment for purchasing beautifying and wellbeing services in current British spas.

The original idea to undertake this study derived from the results of the Masters level project, which examined the purchase motives of the British female spa customers from the North East of England. The literature review showed a gap in consumer research studies into what motivates male customers to spend their leisure time in spas. With the intention of bridging this gap, the researcher embarked on another research project, however, this time focusing on the purchasing decisions of the male spa visitors in the same North East region.



It is important to mention that the researcher does not have any connection to the spa business neither in this, nor in her native country, but holds a genuine personal interest in health, beauty and wellbeing. In addition, from her observation and comparison of British and Lithuanian cultures, she noticed a difference in how men preserve their health. Spas in Lithuania are attended by customers of both gender and ages without exceptions and are not perceived to be the spaces of the female clientele (BGI Consulting, 2007). To date, they have been predominantly used for health and wellbeing benefits and for many years were part of rehabilitation practices within the National Health Service. Yet, with privatisation many of these centres were turned into modern oasis for relaxation, health and beautification. Nevertheless, they remain as gender-free spaces for individual purposes and business corporate days.

Based on personal observation, men's attitudes to spas in both countries diverge. This disparity increased the researcher's curiosity to seek insight into what obstructs men in the UK to consume spas for health, leisure and pleasure as they are in other countries in Eastern or Western Europe. Additionally, the non-existence of research analysing spa consumption from the male customers' point of view encouraged the author of this study to undertake the second project to explore the attitudes and motives of the male market segment in a spa consumption context in the North East of England.

## **1.5 Research necessity**

### **1.5.1 Calls from gender and consumer studies**

The need to carry out a thorough study exploring the motives behind men's consumption of products and services delivered by the beauty and wellbeing industries has been encouraged by scholars from the disciplines of sociology and marketing (Barber, 2008; Costa, 1994a; Iida, 2005; McNeill and Douglas, 2011; Otnes and McGrath, 2001; Tuncay, 2006). For example, Barber (2008) highlights the necessity of such research, since men perceive grooming as essential for successful business. Iida (2005) argues that the best strategy in explaining the cultural phenomenon of "feminisation of masculinity" would be to look into the social actors' intentions and the message they convey to society through such practices.

Furthermore, one of the most recent studies into men's grooming argued that the relationship between gender and its impact on consumption remains underexplored in the marketing literature (McNeill and Douglas, 2011). As the evidence shows, the majority of these articles come from the domain of sociology, while consumer research

has paid little attention to explaining the new trends in male consumption. This study shares a similar view with McNeill and Douglas (2011) regarding the deficit of enlightenment on the reasons of male customers for selecting products and services, typically assigned to female clientele.

### **1.5.2 Interdisciplinary research**

The UK male spa consumer's motives for purchasing beauty and wellbeing services in spas across the North East of England will be examined through the prism of gender or more specifically, current perceptions of masculinity. The era of postmodernism allows plurality and accepts the crossing of settled boundaries and the mixture of genres; therefore, it is perceived to be normal for different disciplines to be intermixed (Jencks, 1996). Scholars have already actively encouraged using gender advances, in order to bring more light into the current trends of consumer behaviour (Bettany *et al.* 2010; Iida, 2005; Martens, 2009; Otnes and McGrath, 2001; Tuncay, 2006). For example, Martens (2009) argued that including the notion of gender in the research of consumer behaviour is of central importance.

Bettany *et al.* (2010) supports interdisciplinary research by encouraging the inclusion of gender studies in the area of consumer behaviour because more advanced knowledge in this subject group is required. Finally, the call for interdisciplinary research can be concluded with the view of Costa (1994a). "Because gender is pervasive, intricate, and interwoven with virtually all aspects of human behaviour, further study is necessary if we are to understand more fully this important dimension of society and individual behaviour" (Costa, 1994a, p. viii).

Taking into consideration the opinions expressed, this doctoral study responds to this call aiming to expand knowledge in the area of consumer behaviour by using the concept of gender in order to find out how current perceptions of masculinity influence the social phenomenon of male body aestheticization in the context of the consumption of wellbeing and beauty services in spas in the North East. This will show whether the perceptions of masculinity from the point of view of male participants are different to the ones that gender and consumer research has outlined up to date. Furthermore, by exploring men's motives for purchasing spa services this study will support or reject the notion about the rise of aesthetically conscious men. The results gathered will bring clarity to whether men in the North East of England are concerned about their physical appearance and respond to the phenomenon of male body aestheticization by opting

for services and products that can be of benefit to their physical and psychological wellbeing. This information will benefit, in particular, the spa industry, which could prepare specific strategies in order to attract its niche male market segment.

## **1.6 Research question and objectives**

### **1.6.1 Research question**

Therefore, this research aims to answer the following question:

How do current perceptions of masculinity influence the UK male spa customers' motives to engage in practices enhancing one's physical appearance and wellbeing?

This will be achieved by investigating:

- The aspects of masculinity from the male research participants' point of view
- The key purchasing motives of male spa customers for aesthetic and wellbeing services

### **1.6.2 Research objectives**

Research objectives, which will enable the researcher to answer the research question, are:

- To present postmodern conceptual underpinnings of masculinity from gender and consumer behaviour literature (addressed in **Chapter 2**);
- To provide the contemporary ideals of masculinity from the male research participants' perspectives, collected in spas in the North East of England (addressed in **Chapters 4, 5 and 6**);
- To select a methodology, which reflects the researcher's ontological and epistemological views, including the overall research theoretical perspective and provide an insight into the motives of research participants for spa services, enhancing physical appearance and wellbeing (addressed in **Chapter 3**);

- To utilise appropriate methodological tools to collect and analyse data, addressing the research question (addressed in **Chapter 4, 5 and 6**);
- To develop a theory, concerning the evolving male spa segment and its consumption habits in order to enable spa and beauty businesses to create adequate services, meeting the requirements of the male market segment (addressed in **Chapters 5 and 6**).

## 1.7 Layout of thesis

This section will provide a brief summary of the thesis, consisting of eight chapters. This will be done by outlining the key points about each of them.

**Chapter 2** will present the review of the literature, examining the concept of masculinity. This concept will be introduced following the short introduction to what gender, gender norms and gender roles are, as this will give a background to better understand how perceptions of masculinity develop through time and space. It will then provide a critical overview of studies and the key theories related to the concept of masculinity. In addition, there will be a section about the cultural and art movement of postmodernism and its effect on the construction of male identities and their consumption priorities. Finally, it will conclude with the latest conceptualisations of masculinity found in sociological literature.

**Chapter 3** will provide the methodological specifications of this study and will outline the reasons for selecting a specific research approach and theoretical perspective to guide this study. This will be followed by the introduction to the methodological approach, such as the grounded theory. The latter will be employed to assist in meeting the aim and the objectives of this PhD work. Finally, the chapter will conclude with the section explaining how the process of data collection and analysis will be carried out in this study.

The following **Chapters 4 and 5** will explain the process of data analysis, which consists of a few stages. Firstly, **Chapter 4** will give a precise explanation of the initial coding, known as open coding, and how it led onto the next stage of coding, which explores the relationship between the categories. After outlining the process of axial coding and the categories developed, **Chapter 5** will discuss the results of the final

analysis from the data gathered at the selective coding stage. They will be introduced in the form of theory.

**Chapter 6** will compare the key findings of the emergent theory with the extant body of knowledge. It will outline the necessity for placing the theory derived within the realms of related literature. The whole purpose of this chapter is to validate the theory developed and to extend and refine the available knowledge in the studied field.

**Chapter 7**, the final chapter, will draw on the conclusions reached after comparing the theory developed with the available body of literature. It will outline the specific areas of knowledge to which this work can contribute. In addition, it will also make practical recommendations for spa management, as well as other industries, selling products and services with restorative and beautifying properties. Finally, this chapter will also consider the limitations of the study and will specify the potential areas for future research.

## **1.8 Chapter summary**

This chapter met its objective and provided an overview of the thesis undertaken for developing a theory about the motives of male spa consumers' for using services that enhance one's physical appearance and wellbeing. The chapter introduced the concept of masculinity as the key area around which the whole thesis will focus on. From here a research background, the context of the study and its necessity have been given as a clear starter to this research. Subsequently, it was followed by the section, specifying the research question and objectives. Finally, this chapter has concluded with a brief summary about the remaining parts of this thesis.

# Chapter 2: Masculinity

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## 2.1 Overview of chapter

The previous chapter introduced the project by providing an overview of the thesis that has been written in order to illuminate male spa consumption trends, prevalent in the North East of England. The aim of this chapter, however, is to meet the objective of this research that has been set to explore the link between gender and consumption. This will be achieved by:

Providing postmodern conceptual underpinnings of masculinity from gender and consumer behaviour literatures

The chapter begins with the definitions of gender, gender norms and gender roles. The discussion of these three terms were thought to be necessary before stepping into the prevalent conceptualisations of masculinity, given that these social and cultural rules have an impact on how masculinities have been constructed in social environments in the past and nowadays. It then moves onto providing an overview of studies of masculinities, followed by the main theories related to the concept of masculinity. All this information has been sought from the available body of literature, comprised predominantly of gender and consumer research, and at times of organisational and psychology studies.

The second part of this chapter addresses changes, taking place in the area of consumption due to the influence of postmodernism. This discussion is primarily based on the consumption research in the context of body aesthetization, performed through a range of activities, such as shopping, the use of grooming products and services. Two types of masculinities, which match the description of an aesthetical male consumer, are presented afterwards. The chapter ends with the overview of other models of masculinity that scholars recently proposed while researching male gender issues in a wide array of contexts. Lastly, the influence of sociocultural norms finalises the discussion on how it affects consumer behaviour.

## 2.2 Gender, gender roles and gender norms

Gender as a topic in academic discussions firstly appeared in the field of sociology. According to Bettany *et al.* (2010), the term “gender” was introduced in this area of research in 1972 by Anne Oakley, who officially made a distinction between gender and sex conceptualisations. In general, scholars conceptualise gender as the ideology, which reflects the established standards of the appropriate behaviour for men and women (Tuncay Zayer and Otnes, 2012; Nelson and Vilela, 2012). For instance, in the view of Nelson and Vilela (2012), gender is a social, historical and cultural construction of ideas and beliefs, which differentiates males from females and vice versa. This difference is determined by gender roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that society assigns to each gender.

If sex is based on biological differences, gender rests on social foundations, and this is true since the concept of gender is used to explain social differences between men and women (Sydie, 2006). Nevertheless, it is important to stress that gender is not a unit, but an action. This perspective was firstly expressed by West and Zimmerman (1987) who argued that individuals “do” gender through interactions, carried out in various sociocultural settings. This view was later adopted by gender performativity theorist Judith Butler (1999), who contended that gender is culturally constructed, thus, it is a doing, and for this reason it cannot be regarded as an outcome of sex, nor can it be fixed as sex.

Gender roles, however, are the socially learnt behaviours and activities that are associated with femininity and masculinity (Nelson and Vilela, 2012). “Certain traits tend to be associated with men and women as both genders are socialized in a particular way to play distinct roles within the society” (Nelson and Vilela, 2012, p. 114). The gender role theory asserts, that depending on their social status, each individual has to conform to a specific role (i.e. neighbour, doctor, husband, father, etc.), and its fulfilment is often encouraged through rewards or punishments (Robertson, 2007). As scholars note, a failure to fulfil social expectations or roles often leads to the male gender role strain (Pleck, 1995) or, in the view of Robertson (2007), to pressures resulting in stress and related health problems. The gender role strain theory argues that the greater the internalisation of roles by the individual, the greater is the role strain experienced due to inability to meet social expectations (Robertson, 2007).

Scholars report a common tendency in society to prescribe certain characteristics to men and women. They are acquired through the process of socialisation within various social establishments (family, peers networks, education, sport and church), including the media. These social institutions, as the socialisation theory asserts, guide and teach both genders the particular ways of socialisation, appropriate for each gender (Hofstede, 1984; Levant and Pollack, 1995; Nelson and Vilela, 2012; Ward, Merriwether and Caruthers, 2006) by passing these norms from one generation to another (Hofstede, 1984). The appropriateness of the behaviour for each gender, according to Hofstede (1984), unfortunately, creates gender binary, and women's magazines are in particularly accountable for contributing to the duality of gender roles.

It has been argued that the division of labour also contributes towards the distinctive roles that men and women are assigned to play. It has been unanimously agreed that in Western cultures even nowadays socialisation pressures lead to the expectation that women should embrace nurturing roles and be orientated to others, and behave relationally and communally (Cameron and Nadler, 2013; Diekman and Goodfriend, 2006; Hofstede, 1984). On the other hand, it is a common expectation for men to be breadwinners, demonstrate physical and emotional strength (Levant, 1995) and perform individualistic behaviours, described as agentic (i.e., being independent, decision maker, aggressive, competitive and risk taker) (Cameron and Nadler, 2013; Diekman and Goodfriend, 2006; Hearn *et al.* 2012).

Simultaneously, as gender and organisational studies acknowledge, such roles led men into leadership positions and power within working environments (Billing, 2011; Bryans and Mavin, 2003; Cameron and Nadler, 2013; Collinson and Hearn, 1996; Mavin, 2009; Panayiotou, 2010; Patterson, Mavin and Turner, 2012), reinforcing the legitimisation of men's domination and authority in organisations (Billing, 2011; Mavin, 2009; Patterson, Mavin and Turner, 2012). As was reported in the first part of the millennium, women were a minority at the top of organisations (Bryans and Mavin, 2003), and this trend has not changed much in recent years (Mavin, 2009). For example, Mavin (2009) reports that in the education sector the majority of leading positions are often taken by men in great numbers.

Back in 1980s, Hofstede (1984) explained gender binary in managerial roles through the goals that organisations set. According to him, in a business environment goals often tend to be "masculine", hence men are promoted more often than women; whereas workplaces that have more feminine goals more often empower women



(Hofstede, 1984). However, as practice shows, even the masculine leadership style employed by women leaders does not receive great praise, since gender sexual stereotypes are continuously applied in social settings, not bypassing management arenas (Mavin, 2009).

However, gender and organisation studies report changes, which affect the male gender position at work, often in the sphere of manufacturing. Due to rapid economic and social changes in work environments, by which we mean an increase in women's participation in the workforce and a noticeable decrease in manufacturing jobs, many men became subject to transition from the heavy industry jobs to a "feminised service-based economy" (Roberts, 2014, p. 3). Undoubtedly, this led to a concern about the role of men in society, which again takes us back to the rebirth of the popular discourse of "crisis in masculinity", initiated by Mac an Ghaill (1994) in the 1990's. While the government claims that men reluctantly accept jobs in the service sector, Roberts (2014), nevertheless, questions this position and supports his disbelief with the positive responses gathered from the interviews with the young, heterosexual, working-class men. Given that men's experiences in the front-line service work are underexplored, misguided assumptions about men's negative attitude to service-based employment often erupt and make an impact on the construction of male identities (Roberts, 2014).

Roberts (2014) goes further to say that although there are men who accept the model of masculinity, exhibiting misogyny, homophobia and resistance to certain type of jobs, this only occurs on a very small scale, given that the majority of men express supportive and tolerant attitudes towards social equality (Anderson, 2009; McCormack, 2012). Drawing upon the statement of Roberts (2014), a conclusion can be made that more tolerant forms of masculinity have emerged nowadays in various social spheres including workplaces.

## **2.3 Concept of masculinity**

Gender scholars agree on the concept of masculinity and unanimously outline its social side and multiplicity as prevalent characteristics (Beynon, 2002, Benwell, 2003; Connell, 2000; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Edwards, 2006; Evans, 2005; van Hoven and Hörschelmann, 2005; McDowell, 2005; Tuncay, 2006; Tuncay Zayer and Otnes, 2012). Masculinity is depicted in the academic literature as a social construct that is in consensus with the norms, projected in a particular society. It is not a "fixed entity", a characteristic of the individual (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005) or a state

of being (Evans, 2005), but rather a socially performed discourse that is constructed collectively (Brownlie andn Hewer, 2007; Tuncay Zayer and Otnes, 2012) within a specific culture. As Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) assert, masculinity does not represent a certain type of a man, but rather it is a chosen behaviour model, applicable to men's needs. Thus, it is a "doing" and not a "being" (West and Zimmerman, 2009). "Masculinities are configurations of practice that are accomplished in social action and, therefore, can differ according to the gender relations in a particular social setting" (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, p.836). Thus, in short, masculinity cannot be possessed, but, on the contrary, only produced through participation in masculine practices.

Masculinity and femininity are often presented in the available literature as opposites that change in relation to each other (Cornwall and Lindisfarne, 1994b). Hence, masculinity is described as a relational social construct, which develops on the basis of power hierarchy and relationships between men and women (Benwell, 2003; Connell, 2000). For this reason, it can be best understood with reference to femininity. Nevertheless, masculinity can be equally shaped by the relationships with other males. For instance, McDowell (2005) stresses that this multiple social construction defines men's position, which can be either superior or inferior in comparison to other men. To conclude, masculinities are constructed through the person's relation to others (Dunlap and Johnson, 2013), and this includes women, men and even sexual orientations (Panayiotou, 2010).

It has been acknowledged that masculinity shows a tendency to change in time and space and be multiple (Beynon, 2002; Benwell, 2003; Connell, 2000; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Edwards, 2006; Richardson, 2010; Tuncay, 2006). For instance, Connell (2000) has argued that masculinity is never single-sided since masculinities are multidimensional. According to Edwards (2006), they vary and have an ability to change and develop into such identities that can be more positive. In addition, Beynon (2002) also contributed to the notion of multiplicity of masculinity. He sees masculinity, as playful and contradicting at the same time, admitting that this cultural dimension is a "singular-plural", much like 'data' that can take many different forms" (Beynon, 2002, p. 2). Furthermore, the multiplicity of masculinities can also be explained through the time dimension, since some, as Brittan (2001) argues, can be "long-lived", while others can be best described "as ephemeral as fads in pop music" (p. 52).

The available body of literature outlines that perceptions of masculinity can be influenced by a few factors, and these are not limited to class, race and ethnicity, sexuality, age, education or religion, but also include cultural and historical contexts as equally strong sources of influence, predetermining the person's understanding of masculine values (Beynon, 2002; Connell, 2000; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Holt and Thompson, 2004; Nelson and Vilela, 2012; Tuncay 2006). As Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) explain, masculinities vary because they are embodied in specific social environments. They are constructed and reconstructed due to historical changes, and these circumstances are often subject to transformation (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Since the aforementioned social elements have a tendency to change, this has an effect on the stability of one's masculine ideals. Hence, consequently, perceptions of masculinity, so as masculinities evolve.

## **2.4 Studies of masculinity**

### **2.4.1 First stage of critical studies**

There are three stages in masculinity studies in the history of gender research (Edwards, 2006). The first one, known as the *sex role paradigm*, was developed in the 1970s and was expected to bring more clarity about the concept of masculinity (Edwards, 2006). In this period, much of the contribution came from Pleck (1995), who encouraged viewing masculinity as a role that is not stable but constantly changing over a lifetime. The sex role theory admitted the social aspect playing a key role in the sexual differentiation process, since sex roles are learnt and acquired through socialisation (Carrigan, Connell and Lee, 1985).

The sex role theory views masculinity as the consequence of the male sex role (Edwards, 2006). It perceives masculinity as a socially constructed identity, based on the differences between men and women (Edwards, 2006; van Hoven and Hörschelmann, 2005; Richardson, 2010). "In this approach, sex roles are seen as the prototypes into which men's and women's identities are forged through socialization" (van Hoven and Hörschelmann, 2005, p. 7). van Hoven and Hörschelmann (2005) note that during that period men were expected to meet the requirements of social norms and possess such characteristics, as activity, mastery, rationality and competence (Kimmel, 1990).

According to Sydnie (2006), through the concept of sex roles, social and cultural factors were introduced into gender research, given that previously these differences were

based primarily on sex, perceived as biological given. Haywood and Mac an Ghail (2003) argue that through the close link between the sex role and socialization each gender has been presented with appropriate roles of behaviour. Hence, the definition of masculinity cannot be drawn without the “polarized norms and expectations between genders”, which are both perceived as the central components in the depiction of masculine identity (Haywood and Mac an Ghail, 2003, p.7).

### **2.4.2 Second stage of critical studies**

The second period of masculinity studies, strongly influenced by feminism in the 1980s, focused on masculinity as a performance (Edwards, 2006). The developed sex paradigm was criticised for being politically dubious and theoretically limited, therefore giving power and control to leading masculinities (Edwards, 2006). In addition, the male sex role theory was criticised for blurring the behaviour and norms, for the homogenising effect of the role concept, and its difficulties in accounting for power relations between men and women (Carrigan, Connell and Lee, 1985; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). For example, Carrigan, Connell and Lee (1985) argued that sex role theory did not distinguish in the difference between expectations and the actual behaviour of men. Furthermore, in their view, the sex role theory was limited in the way that it could not record changes arising from gender relations and continued to hide the issues of power and material inequality. At the same time, as Robertson (2007) notes, it could not separate biological sex from gender. By placing men and women at the opposite ends of the continuum, exploring gender relations became an unattainable task.

In the 1980s a particularly significant input was received from Connell, who aimed to show that masculinity is not singular but plural and that some men, particularly from a lower background and different class, are subject to oppression, coming from dominant hegemonic masculinities (Carrigan, Connell and Lee, 1985; Connell, 1987). For example, gay, working-class and black male communities were on the subordination list, whereas white middle-class males were a source of oppression. Therefore, the second wave of masculinity studies predominantly focused on power and its complex meanings and operations (Edwards, 2006). For example, Cockburn (1990) differentiated power exercised by managers from the power of class and the power of men, dominating women socially, economically and sexually. Kimmel (1990) joined the discussion on power issues addressing that they do not exclusively affect women but also less preferable or non-traditional masculinities. During that period, it was admitted

that masculinity is a social construction, created through power relationships (Kimmel, 1990).

In the same decade, Brittan (1989) agreed with Connell (1987) on the plurality of masculinities by asserting that multiple masculinities give an insight into available male gender ideals for men to choose. Although male identities have a tendency to alter within a short period, this does not apply to male power. To avoid confusion between masculinities, as the styles of self-presentation and power, Brittan (1989; 2001) introduced the term 'masculinism' as the ideology of patriarchy, which justifies men's power and makes it seem more natural. He further argued that masculinism perceives differences between men and women as natural, gender as not negotiable and heterosexuality as normal. Since one of its distinctive features is resistance to change (Brittan, 2001), masculinism, by exalting the superiority of males, continues to justify the oppression of females (Haywood and Mac an Ghaill, 2003).

During the same period of critical masculinity studies, feminist theory challenged hegemonic understandings of gender and criticised gendered power relations, particularly addressing the issue of gender inequalities in patriarchal Western societies (van Hoven and Hörschelmann, 2005). For example, Connell (1987) talked about gender disparities, found not only in the level of income and literacy, but also in participation in politics and the experience of domestic violence. Men's supremacy in the above-mentioned spheres of life consequently led to the oppression of women. Van Hoven and Hörschelmann (2005) notice, that while the critique of the patriarchal system in society brought to light inequalities between both genders, it has also created an image of masculinity as oppressing and dominant.

Finally, the review of the second wave of masculinity studies suggests that other forms of masculinity and queer sexualities remained underexplored until the appearance of poststructural and queer theories (van Hoven and Hörschelmann, 2005), which will be briefly introduced in the following section of this chapter.

### **2.4.3 Third stage of critical studies**

The third current of critical studies about masculinity shifted attention to the theory of masculinities rather than men's practices (Edwards, 2006). According to Edwards (2006), much of the work carried out has been influenced by the poststructuralist theory, which is concerned with performativity and sexuality (Butler, 1999). According

to Davies and Hunt (1994), poststructuralist discourses disrupt binary thinking by deconstructing binaries and displacing hierarchies through multiple positions.

Such an approach has been practiced within the field of research due to the postmodernists' disbelief in the coherence of the concept of masculinity (Robertson, 2007). Hence, for this reason, masculinities were theorised as fragmented and incoherent. Nevertheless, Robertson (2007) critiques such approach, arguing, that by fearing to use dualism or categorise people, research can fail to shed light on what is hidden. In this way he replied to Coleman (1990) who argued against the role of sociologists to explain the hidden reality of men in the theory of masculinity. Conversely, Coleman (1990) encouraged sociologists to opt out of theorising masculinities and rather explain the occasions of its use.

Edwards (2006) suggests that during the 1990s the influences on the depiction of masculine identity also came from the queer theory. According to Holmes (2007), the queer theory disconnects gender from sex and rejects binary classifications of gender. It has been acknowledged, that the queer theory criticises social tendencies to depict heterosexuality as "normal" and "natural" sexuality (Holmes, 2007). According to her, queer theorists do not see identities as singular but multiple, disjointed and persistently changing, hence, sexual preferences and desires are not fixed either. Indeed, "there are no "true" gender identities or natural sexes: rather maleness and femaleness are "performances" or "simulations" (Kitzinger and Wilkinson, 1994, p. 452). Thus, deconstructing representations of masculinity become the focus in poststructural gender studies, giving more attention to different views about the social world (Holmes, 2007).

The theory of performativity, based on Edward's (2006) view, came to show human social interactions. Scholars agree that masculine identities develop from performance (Edwards, 2006; Evans, 2005). Edwards (2006) suggests that all acts, even those that are perceived to be normative, are 'performative'. He argues that performativity extends the social constructionist theory, which perceives identities as socially constructed. According to Edwards (2006), the theory of performativity was strongly discussed in Mark Simpson's book "Male Impersonators", where new masculinity traits (i.e. the rise of narcissism, an interest in shopping and the increase of representations of masculinity ideals in the media and advertising) were analysed. Through Simpson's text, the attention from work related issues was shifted to men's appearance and the blurring boundaries of sexuality (Edwards, 2006). An overview of the mentioned

transition will be discussed in the subsection 2.5.3 of this literature review, following the overview of the available theories of traditional masculinity.

## **2.5 Theories of masculinity**

### **2.5.1 Hegemonic masculinity**

#### **2.5.1.1 Concept of hegemonic masculinity**

The term hegemonic masculinity was proposed nearly three decades ago and made a profound impact on the conceptualisations of masculinity in the history of gender research. This concept is closely associated with the name of Connell (1987; 1995, 2000, 2005), who introduced this term in the field of gender, although originally the concept “hegemony” was coined by Antonio Gramsci in the study about class relations.

Since the 1980s hegemonic masculinity as a term has been used in many subject areas, for example, starting with sociology (Adams, Anderson and McCormack, 2010; Chesley, 2011; Davis, 2002; Dean, 2013; Hall *et al.* 2012; Heasley, 2005; van Hoven and Hörschelmann, 2005; Ricciardelli, Clow and White, 2010; Richardson, 2010; Stroud, 2012; de Visser, 2009), where it was first applied, and then extending its viability in anthropology (Cornwall and Lindisfarne, 1994a,b), sport (Grindstaff and West, 2011; Næss, 2010; Pringle, 2005) as well as consumer research (Avery, 2012; Patterson and Elliott, 2002) and leisure studies (Dunlap and Johnson, 2013; Gee and Jackson, 2011; Kivel and Johnson, 2009). In addition, it has also been referred to when discussing issues in criminology (Messerschmidt, 2005; Treadwell and Garland, 2011), in studies about media representations of men (Edwards, 2003; McKay, Mikosza and Hutchins, 2005; Kivel and Johnson, 2009; Patterson and Elliott, 2002; Vigorito and Curry, 1998) and even in exploring men’s health practices (Robertson, 2007; Sabo, 2005; Springer and Mouzon, 2011). Yet, this concept has also been applied in an organisational context, where it was recognized that workplaces and bureaucracies were gendered (Bryans and Mavin, 2003; Collinson and Hearn, 2005; Mavin, 2009; Patterson, Mavin and Turner, 2012; Panayiotou, 2010).

Gender literature argues that traditionally hegemonic masculinity has been presented as a social norm that should be complied with or embraced by men (Davis, 2002; Evans, 2005; Richardson, 2010; Stibbe, 2004). As Cornwall and Lindisfarne (1994b) point out, hegemonic masculinities, as dominant social constructions, determine the standards against which other masculinities are evaluated. Nonetheless, hegemonic

masculinity is never universal, since various hegemonic models operate in a wide variety of contexts, emphasizing different attributes, such as physical prowess or emotionality, depending on the context (Cornwall and Lindisfarne, 1994b).

Hegemonic masculinities are usually constructed along the subordinate male counterparts. “Those who dominate in any particular setting are constrained by the hidden transcripts of their subordinates, while the subordinates are neither passive nor mystified, but actively negotiate their position *vis-à-vis* those who are more powerful” (Cornwall and Lindisfarne, 1994b, p. 24). Yet, homosexual identities have often been depicted in the literature, as being devaluated and treated as a marginalised form of masculinity, with homophobia often prevailing through teasing and ridicule. Empirical findings show that nowadays men still feel inclined to contest the traditional form of masculinity, because it is perceived to be safe and provides social security due to the superiority gained over the other forms of masculinities as well as the female gender (Næss, 2010).

What makes this type of masculinity popular is its representation as a norm, which cannot be questioned or questionable but is measured up against (Davis, 2002). The majority of gender and consumer researchers have highlighted the power of legitimacy that this model of manliness uses to defend its actions. According to Stibbe (2004), hegemonic masculinity is depicted and reproduced as a natural and the morally appropriate way of behaviour. This configuration of male gender practices, as Dunlap and Johnson (2013) suggest excels the patriarchy and heterosexuality through which dominance is maintained over women and non-heterosexuals, and, as a result, secures and maintains the established social order.

The legitimacy of hegemonic masculinity is usually gained through the marginalisation of other less popular masculine identities, because of the difference in their sexuality, ethnicity, social class, age or abilities (van Hoven and Hörschelmann, 2005). Van Hoven and Hörschelmann (2005) argue that undersubscribed masculine identities are usually treated as feminine, therefore inferior. Inequality among different masculinities has also been mentioned by Cornwall and Lindisfarne (1994a), who argued that hegemonic masculine identities represent a successful version of “being a man”, making other forms of masculinity appear like an “underling”. Such discourses clearly explain why new models or perceptions of masculinity failed in the past to be widely accepted by society, constricting less manly men from expressing themselves.



Yet, Connell (1995) has ascribed the reason for the dominance of hegemonic masculinity within the social sphere to its ability to adopt a commonly accepted strategy. However, its power, according to Connell (2000), is subjected to change when conditions for defending patriarchy transform. In this case, new groups appear and challenge the old system by forming a new hegemony.

#### **2.5.1.2 Criticism towards hegemonic masculinity**

Despite its popularity in scholarly scripts, the theory of hegemonic masculinity has attracted some criticism, and this, as Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) address, predominantly came from poststructuralists. In the 1980s, men felt pressure to embody hegemonic male ideals, which clearly defined social hierarchy between genders (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005) and enforced heteronormativity, disacknowledging gender divergence (Dean, 2013). During that time and even nowadays, hegemonic masculinity continues to be imposed as normative and superior. For instance, it is regarded as an ideal model of masculinity and it is desired and contested by men due to the superiority they gain in relation to subordinated masculinities (homosexual, disabled, non-white or overweight) and women (Connell, 2000; Næss, 2010). Nonetheless, hegemonic masculinities do not achieve dominance through violence (although, as admitted, violent actions can support the former), but through culture, social institutions and persuasion (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005).

The concept of hegemonic masculinity has also been criticised for being blurred and unclear (Collinson and Hearn, 1996; Collinson and Hearn, 2005; Haywood and Mac an Ghaill, 1996). For instance, Collinson and Hearn (2005) question whether the term hegemonic masculinity refers to “men’s behaviors, identities, relationships, experiences, appearances, images, discourses, or practices in workplaces” (p. 298). In addition, because the hegemonic version of masculinity is full of contradictions, it makes it more difficult to understand what a real man is. In addition, this cultural dimension has also been critiqued for being descriptive and generating typologies in men. However, in the view of Collinson and Hearn (2005), multiplicity in masculinities does not merely categorise differences in men, but, on the contrary, allows examining power relationships among men and with women.

Hegemonic masculinity was also condemned for deemphasising problems coming from power and dominance. Back in 1996, Collinson and Hearn argued that power in organisations was often gendered, and with a failure to acknowledge this issue the

legitimisation of managerial male power and authority was supported further. Today, however, similar issues persist. Although the majority of women work outside the home, men still outnumber women managers (Billing, 2011). Collinson and Hearn (2005) agree that hegemonic masculinity should be defined as the source of negativity in workplaces. Women and sometimes other men experience this through the power and authority exercised by managers. However, as Collinson and Hearn (2005) contend, issues, concerning the power of male managers, cannot be attributed solely to gender, since other factors (i.e. hierarchy, bureaucracies, race, ethnicity, class and age) have an impact in establishing and strengthening male power in organisations.

In response to all the criticism received, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) argued that hegemonic masculinities do not embody only negative behaviour but, conversely, can offer men some positive outcomes, for example, secure the status of a financial provider for the family, sustain a sexual relationship and give an opportunity to raise children. In addition, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) responded that if masculinity was combined only of negative characteristics, then it would have not been entitled hegemonic.

### **2.5.1.3 Traits of traditional masculinity**

#### **Ability to alter**

It was mentioned in section 2.3 that various factors determine the conceptualisation of masculinity and these are occupation, sexuality, behaviour, race, ethnicity, class, historical context, marital status, culture, personal circumstances and domination (Benwell, 2003; Connell, 2005; Hall and Gough, 2011; Pringle, 2005, Tuncay, 2006). Since the elements mentioned, except race, have a tendency to change, this has an effect on the stability of hegemonic masculinity. Connell (1995) agrees that hegemonic masculinity can undergo some changes, but he has also emphasised an exceptional ability of this model of masculinity to resist them. The power of hegemonic masculinity firstly, lies in its status quo and then in its ability to transform itself into a new hegemonic form following confrontation (Connell, 2005). This was agreed with by Hall and Gough (2011), who argued that the growing tendency among men to use cosmetics and other grooming products implies that conventional masculinity is being challenged and simultaneously “reproduced and reworked to incorporate contemporary consumption and lifestyle patterns” (Hall and Gough, 2011, p. 82).

#### **Difficult to adopt**

Although it was stated in the preceding paragraph that hegemonic male gender ideals have a tendency to alter, a number of scholars found that some men struggle to adopt

this model of masculinity, by failing to meet all of its aspects, for example, confidence, power, self-reliance, financial status and heterosexual prowess (Edwards, 2006; Foyster, 1999; Springer and Mouze, 2011). Social expectations towards men and their roles have been viewed as boundaries in achieving the ideal masculine identity. These expectations also relate to the work qualities that men are expected to possess, for example, competitiveness, career building and success (Edwards, 2006). It is believed that unrealistic expectations can possibly leave a negative impact on men's physical and psychological health, as well as on their relationship with women (Hill, 2006). Previously it has been argued that due to incongruity between reality and social expectations, young men often failed to meet the criteria of an ideal man. It is unsurprising that many men continue to face criticism either for a deficiency of manliness or for masculine abundance, as Haywood and Mac an Ghaill (2003) state.

Research in gender histories outline that this tendency has continued since the seventeenth century. For instance, Foyster (1999) reminds us that in earlier centuries men had to comply with the requirements of a patriarchal system by forming heterosexual marital relationships. However, not all men were able to maintain such exclusive sexual relationships, with some struggling to gain power in this way; hence they would often stop trying to get closer to the ideals of hegemonic masculinity (Foyster, 1999). Foyster (1999) explains:

*The insults of 'whore' and 'cuckolds' were targeted against those who did not direct their relationships towards this ideal. The ideology of patriarchy thus led to the construction of a system of morality which rewarded or chastised those who succeeded or failed to live up to its requirements.*

Foyster (1999, p. 5)

In addition, those who failed to meet the requirements of popular masculinity were socially attributed to the currently so-called subordinated groups of men, with homosexuality being one of them in the early modern Britain. In the seventeenth century, as Foyster (1999) suggests, heterosexuality was regarded as socially normative, thus men, who deviated from their heterosexual relationships were labelled effeminate and only one century later they did begin to be characterised as homosexuals.

The review of gender and consumer research suggests that in this contemporary era men's relationship with the standards of hegemonic masculinity has not changed significantly. Firstly, men continue to find it difficult to imitate an ideal physical image of

the traditional man. For example, to develop an athletic, strong and large masculine body is not so easily achievable. As the empirical findings suggest, men admire muscular bodies, represented in advertisements, however, they perceive the traditional male body ideal as unrealistic, hence unattainable (Elliott and Elliott, 2005; Pompper, 2010). Furthermore, it was discovered that men can be less confident about their bodies if they fail to meet the social standards of physical attractiveness for men (Ricciardelli and Clow, 2009). Nevertheless, Davis (2002) disagrees with such notions arguing that men, who practice hegemonic masculinity, perceive the body as irrelevant giving an explicit preference to the mind as the creator of rationality.

In addition, the depiction of the predominant version of masculinity with an epithet “exaggerated” (Littlefield, 2010) can support the prevalent criticism towards hegemonic masculinity for being too difficult for men to live up to. However, despite the hardship contemporary men face, traditional masculinity remains dominant and continues to marginalise other masculinities that perform their gender in a different way. The notions of other masculinities that have been found in scholarly discourses will be presented in the section 2.5.3, whilst the following section 2.5.2 will provide a discussion on machismo, in many ways similar to the hegemonic masculinity.

## **2.5.2 Machismo**

A slight disagreement exists within social research with regard to the roots of the term machismo. For instance, in the view of Sobralske (2006), the terms “macho” and “machismo” originated from traditional Mexican American culture, thus they are firstly understood as the Mexican concept of a man and masculinity (Sobralske, 2006). However, Asencio (2011) and Stobbe (2005) refer to the Latin American culture in general when explaining the concept of machismo. Nevertheless, Cranford (2007) asserts that machismo reflects gender relations that are prevalent in Latino and particularly Mexican culture.

Scholars agree that machismo denotes gender inequalities due to the empowerment of men as leaders in the public and domestic spheres of life (Cranford, 2007; Sobralske, 2006). For example, the traditional Mexican American culture exalts physical strength, virility and domination as desirable qualities in men, however, does not exclude intelligence, self-confidence and individuality as well as honesty, loyalty and reliability, believing that they are equally relevant traits for constructing Latin male identities (González-López, 2004; Sobralske, 2006).

The concept “machismo” has been used in both gender and organisational research. In organisation studies it appeared to mark the type of style that managers implement within organisations. The conceptualisation of macho has specifically been applied to the style practiced by men. In the literature, the macho management style has been presented as aggressive, rebellious and similar to the battle or struggle. According to Panayiotou (2010), macho managers employ the practices of control and abuse that often distance them from others. The negative behaviour overtly performed by macho does not solely affect women but also other men. For this reason, Panayiotou (2010) relates macho male identity with hegemonic masculinity due to the commonality shared by them in the practices of subordination and marginalisation, aimed both at other males and women.

Nevertheless, machismo, as the evidence shows, can be practiced not only through behaviours that often affect others in a negative way. It can also be expressed by revealing one’s stamina and prowess, as it has been observed in the study exploring the relationship between masculinity and preventive health care (Springer and Mouze, 2011). The authors in this research also use the term “macho man” as an allegory to the behaviours of the older men embodying hegemonic masculinity. Based on hegemonic male ideals, seeking professional health care can be regarded as the sign of weakness, thus men often resist preventive care practices in order to maintain their preferable masculinity, and this tendency, as empirical evidence suggests, is often noticed among men with lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Springer and Mouze, 2011).

The next section of this chapter provides an overview of other masculine identities that differ significantly from the aforementioned masculinities. They will be referred to in this research as contemporary masculinities.

### **2.5.3 Contemporary masculinities**

#### **2.5.3.1 Feminine male identities**

Subsequently, next to the terms “hegemonic masculinity” or a “macho man” new terms have emerged in the latter part of the last century to describe a man. Gender research has identified them as “feminine heterosexual men” (Heasley, 2005; Hill, 2006). In the past, many names have been given to describe men that showed a tendency to “subvert overly restrictive heteropatriarchal sexual scripts” (Hill, 2006, p. 145), for

example, “feminine boys”, “girly boys”, with the most prevalent being “sissies” (Adams, Anderson and McCormack, 2010; Heasley, 2005).

More recently, feminine men received new labels for their behaviours, diverging from the heterosexual male gender norms, for instance, a “new man” (Craig, 1993; Edwards, 2003; Evans, 1989; MacKay, Mikosza and Hutchins, 2005; Woodruffe-Burton, 1998) or the metrosexual (Simpson, 1994, 2002, 2004). Both masculine figures, popularised by the media and advertising, distance themselves from the ideals of a macho or hegemonic masculinity because of their feminine sensitivity or overtly expressed interest in grooming, fashion and style.

### **2.5.3.2 Men’s contemporary activities**

Although a well-established perception of hegemonic masculinity remains dominant in our society, a vast number of scholars (Brownlie and Hewer, 2007; Castelo-Branco, Huezo and Lagarda, 2008; Conseur, Hathcote and Kim, 2008; de Visser, Smith and McDonnell, 2009; Gentry and Harrison, 2010; Hall and Gough, 2011; Harrison, 2008; Hill, 2006; Kimmel and Tissier-Desbordes, 2000; Iida, 2005; Littlefield, 2010; Ricciardelli, 2011; Souden and Diagne, 2009) discuss the changing notions of masculinity in their works. For example, Harrison (2008) notes a tendency among contemporary men to pay more attention to their physical appearance and to construct their identities through consumption of fashion and style products, therefore bringing new male ideals to the fore. The published data details a completely new image of a man, who is not afraid to experiment with his physical looks and actively engages in practices, which for many years have been associated with female consumers.

The activities that the contemporary man engages in vary. Consumer research reports an active participation of men in shopping for food, cooking, eating and socialising (Brownlie and Hewer, 2007), purchasing clothes (Craig, 1993; Crane, 2000; Woodruffe-Burton, 1998) or parenting (Gentry and Harrison, 2010). Furthermore, a present-day man appears to be passionate in the way he looks, and therefore, tends to invest in his physical appearance by using cosmetics (Harrison, 2008; Souiden and Diagne, 2009; Tuncay and Otnes, 2008), expressing his interest in fashion (Bakewell, Mitchell and Rothwell, 2006; Crane, 2000; Conseur, Hathcote and Kim, 2008; Tuncay and Otnes, 2008; Woodruffe-Burton, 1998), attending tanning sessions (Castelo-Branco, Huezo and Lagarda, 2008), depilating his body to increase sexual attractiveness (Boroughs, Cafri and Thompson, 2005; Castelo-Branco, Huezo and Lagarda, 2008; Martins,

Tiggemann and Churchett, 2008) or even taking more extreme measures and getting involved in cosmetic surgeries for the sake of beauty (Atkinson, 2006; Davis, 2002; Ricciardelli and White, 2011). These activities, as some scholars (Davis, 2002; Iida, 2005; Tuncay, 2006) outline, fall outside the traditional sociocultural norms and are regarded as non-masculine or “feminine”.

Bakewell, Mitchell and Rothwell (2006) assert that the word “fashion” is associated with femininity; therefore, it can be argued that these connotations to homosexuality and femininity became the barriers for ungendered consumption. The empirical findings of the latter study suggest that even the male consumers of generation Y, who appear to be the youngest and the most malleable adult shoppers nowadays, still hesitantly practice aestheticizing consumption, despite admitting being fashion orientated and driven. The old-fashioned male gender role stereotypes have been found to be accountable in males for many fears, with homophobia being one of them (Adams, Anderson and McCormack, 2010; McCormack, 2012; Næss, 2010).

It can be argued that the unwelcoming attitude towards men, who perform their gender in a more “feminine” way, is particularly strong among those male consumers who consider themselves as the representatives of the traditional school of thought of masculinity. Indeed, the hegemonic norms of masculinity have been identified as the major constraint in the pursuit of individuality in the construction process of male identities (Crane, 2000):

*In the popular mind, masculine identity is often perceived as fixed and innate rather than socially constructed. Therefore, attempts to construct an identity through clothing behaviour are regarded as suspect, particularly by older men.*

(Cane, 2000, p. 179)

Nevertheless, it has been argued that the majority of men possess a combination of very masculine and some feminine behaviour. For instance, de Visser, Smith and McDonnell (2009), who carried out research into young British men’s perceptions of masculinity, suggest that, overall, masculinity can be constructed even with non-masculine or feminine traits as long as the individual is actively participating in true masculine activities, for example, sport, which has commonly been used to compensate a suspicious conduct (Anderson, 2002). Næss (2010) agrees with this view, stating that participation in sport gives ground for men to acquire the missing qualities or maintain the acquired masculine values starting with physical benefits (i.e.

strength, health and fitness) to emotional properties (i.e. stamina, self-confidence) and bridging gaps in contributing to one's overall wellbeing.

It has been argued that young men employ "feminine" practices in their routines not because of their wish to be feminine, but to reject hegemonic masculine ideals and expectations placed upon them (Iida, 2005). According to Iida (2005), the emergence of alternative gender identities appears at a time when "conventional gender values and ideals become incapable of representing complicated gender awareness of contemporary young men" (p. 6).

Yet, the art-cultural movement of postmodernism can also be regarded as a strong sociocultural influence, forming the new ideals of the contemporary manhood. Thus, masculine identities are constructed accordingly, with an increasing number of men practicing body aestheticization, although, in general, masculinity is not associated with appearance (Crane, 2000). Souiden and Diagne (2009) reinforce this argument stating that postmodern conditions create changes in how and what men consume nowadays.

### **2.5.3.3 Postmodernity and aesthetization**

#### **Historical outlook**

Scholars disagree over the beginning of the art-cultural movement of postmodernism. According to Jencks (1996), the term postmodernism first appeared in the 1930s and it was introduced by the Spanish writer Federico de Onís as a reaction to modernism. However, the majority of researchers note that postmodernism began in the second part of the last century. For example, Maclaran (2009) suggests that postmodernism marks the end of the age of The Enlightenment, which lasted from the mid-eighteenth until the mid-twentieth century. Featherstone (2007) asserts that in the 1960s in New York a group of artists, writers and critiques initiated a movement "beyond the exhausted high modernism", however, it was not until the 1970s and the 1980s that it has escalated into a wider movement, embracing art, literature, architecture and music across the United States and Europe.

#### **Key characteristics of postmodernism**

Featherstone (2007) outlines that postmodernity diminished the boundary between art and reality, between high and mass or popular culture, and exhibited playfulness, pastiche and irony. Postmodernism is also known as plural filiations from modernism, therefore the key features of this movement are pluralism and a critical judgment of the previous ideology (Jencks, 1996). Similarly, Maclaran (2009) argued that



postmodernism can be distinguished from other cultural movements by its tendency to mix various styles. The multiplicity of postmodernism is seen in its acceptance of various perspectives rather than exalting one privileged, since it cannot reflect an absolute “truth” (Maclaran, 2009).

Maclaran (2009) also outlined other distinctive features of postmodernism. Firstly, postmodernism is all about hyperreality. With the help of the media and advertising, the dream world or simulation can become real. Secondly, consumers long for the past; hence the theme of nostalgic consumption is one of the most discussed notions in postmodern research. Other characteristics attributed to postmodernism are known as fragmentation (i.e. fragmenting markets into smaller market segments), de-differentiation (i.e. established hierarchies are blurred), pastiche (i.e. mixing styles, past and present) and anti-foundationalism (i.e. critiquing excessive lifestyles and increased consumerism) (Maclaran, 2009).

In postmodernity, production and consumption are not imaginable without symbolic goods (Featherstone, 2007). According to Venkatesh and Meamber (2006), symbols (i.e. myths, narratives, feelings, fantasies and experiences) are attached to the cultural product and contribute towards the understanding of meaning. Here, McCracken (1989) proposed a Meaning Transfer Model, which conveys that celebrities can reinforce consumption of promoted brands by bringing their own symbols, as consumers would seek products for their meanings. In addition, by using signs, images and simulations the media not only encourage consumption but also efface the distinction between imagery and reality (Featherstone, 2007).

Nevertheless, consumption itself can be symbolic as it marks a symbolic transformation within consumer identities. It allows consumers to reconstruct their self-identities (Burton, 2002) as images of the moment (Firat, 1994). Consumption in postmodern times is no longer seen as a utilitarian activity but, on the opposite, is closely related to the “hedonistic aspects of fun and play” (Burton, 2002, p. 797). Hence, mass consumption is recognised as hedonic and experiential (Featherstone, 2007; Maclaran, 2009). In today’s world enjoyment, in the view of Baudrillard (1998), became an obligation, thus identities are the objects for “enjoyment” and are perceived as a “satisfaction business”. A contemporary consumer desires to be happy, loving and charming or charmed, hence attempts to exploit all the opportunities of enjoyment. In addition, nowadays a consumer is far more engaged in the pursuit of innovativeness, in meeting his needs and wellbeing rather than being a producer (Baudrillard, 1998).

Indeed, postmodern culture stands out as a consumer culture or the culture of consumer society. The blurred distinction between the everyday reality and art, between high and mass culture led towards the aestheticization of everyday life (Featherstone, 2007). Similarly, Venkatesh and Meamber (2006) argued that the production and marketing of symbolic goods formed the aesthetically orientated consumer culture. Within consumer culture, the purpose for consuming can be twofold: to please someone else and the self. This applies both to women and men. Nevertheless, Featherstone (2007) asserts that “consumer culture uses images, signs and symbolic goods which summon up dreams, desires and fantasies which suggest romantic authenticity and emotional fulfilment in narcissistically pleasing oneself instead of others” (p. 27).

The notion of narcissism and the importance for constructing self-identity through consumption runs in a number of studies. For example, Crane (2000) has argued that in the 1970s for post-industrial society the construction of self-identity became more important than building occupational identities, and this primarily has been achieved through clothing, offering a wider choice of lifestyles and representations for personal identities.

Similarly, Baudrillard (1998) argued that the consumer society reflects itself in a narcissistic manner. In his view, self-indulgence became a synonym of perfect consumption, and pleasing oneself is more intensively pursued than pleasing someone else. According to Featherstone (2007), the range of contexts and situations, in which narcissism can be applied and perceived as appropriate is widening, hence luxury spas are among those spaces of consumption, where practical and hedonistic needs for health, pleasure and indulgence could arguably be fulfilled through the practices of wellbeing and body aestheticization.

### **Body aestheticization**

Aesthetics has been referred to in the literature as the philosophy of art and beauty. This concept was firstly coined by the German philosopher Baumgarten in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (White, 1996). At that time, “aesthetics” was used to describe the beauty, harmony and order in the world (White, 1996). Similarly, in postmodernity, the concept of aestheticism means beauty and attractiveness of the objects – be they commodities or the human bodies. Aesthetical experiences that are often gained through consumption are sensual and symbolic (Venkatesh and Meamber, 2006). Venkatesh and Meamber (2006) summarise that experiences become aesthetic when the product

is imbued with aesthetical qualities and the actualisation of it can be perceived, felt or experienced through the involvement of the body.

Body aesthetical acts were discussed in consumer and gender research (Atkinson, 2006; Boroughs, Cafri and Thompson, 2005; Davis, 2002; Ricciardelli, 2011; Ricciardelli and Clow, 2009; Ricciardelli and White, 2011; Patterson and Schroeder, 2010; Woodruffe-Burton, 1998, etc.). Based on consumer culture theory, the construction of identities takes place through consumption, where the body becomes the object of attention. Aesthetical sensations are in particular created and encouraged by advertising, which attaches images of romance, desire, beauty, and fulfilment to all sorts of commodities (Featherstone, 2007) and human bodies (Schroeder and Zwick, 2004). Nevertheless, there is a big difference in how male and female bodies are presented in the media. There is a tendency to show male bodies in magazines as authoritative and powerful, whilst the images of female bodies, on the opposite, narrate the themes of nurturance, passivity, narcissism and sexual admiration from male observers (McKay, Mikosza and Hutchins, 2005; Schroeder and Zwick, 2004). Drawing upon the notions of the cult of the outer beauty, McKay Mikosza and Hutchins (2005) assert that bodies are admired if they meet the ideals of physical appearance (i.e. look young, fit and beautiful) and can be devalued if are not managed according to prevalent standards.

#### **2.5.3.4. Presentation of “feminine” males**

Although gender binary is showing the signs of decline in many spheres of life arguably due to the impact of postmodernism and feminism, aesthetical body interventions remain regarded as womanly or non-heteronormative. Heteronormativity in gender and management studies has been defined as the culture, consisting of institutions, norms and behaviours that contribute in maintaining gender binary, heterosexuality and power relationships within society (Asencio, 2011; Ward and Schneider, 2009; Woodruffe-Burton and Bairstow, 2013). Gender scripts have been differentiating heteronormativity primarily through sexual desire. In men's studies the theory of heteronormativity has been introduced to what is not part of it, which is not feminine and also not homosexual (Hill, 2006). Consequently, terms, such as “queer heterosexuals” emerged to describe feminine men, who, according to Kitzinger and Wilkinson (1994), play gender roles. A few years later, Crane (2000) described men, interested in fashion or other body aestheticization practices, as ambiguous and in conflict.

More recently, Heasley (2005) contributed to the notion of queerness and argued that feminine men embody “queer masculinity”, which stands outside the heteronormative constructions of masculinity and disrupts the normative images of the hegemonic heterosexual men. Thus, heteronormativity is strongly embedded in the conceptualisation of hegemonic masculinity (Asencio, 2011). In comparison to the socially preferred hegemonic heteromasculine icons, queer straight males are regarded as problematized (Heasley, 2005). According to Heasley (2005), in sociological and psychological literatures they can be depicted as deviants, thus, often positioned next to gay identities for gender or sexual inappropriateness.

In addition, feminine men also become the objects of homophobic oppression and can be ostracised from the company of heterosexual males (Heasley, 2005). Similarly, Hill (2006) argued that non-traditional heterosexual men are often rejected by those, who behave according to the traditional sexual norms, because, “sexuality is highly gendered in our society and variations from the stereotype of gender are perceived negatively” (p. 154). Hill (2006) goes further to say that feminine heterosexual men by challenging the heteronormative masculinity stereotypes and by refusing to behave in a traditional way, practice less oppressive heterosexuality (Hill, 2006). Feminine men can be less desirable as prospective partners in heterosexual relationships primarily because their behaviour contravenes gender stereotypes, nevertheless, this trend, as Hill (2006) suggests, might be losing its ground because some women might opt for femininity in men rather than accepting their negative heteronormativity.

The following section of the chapter introduces two types of male identities that are often depicted in the gender and marketing literature as feminine. They stand out from other masculinities with their explicit interest in creating an attractive image of the self through various body aestheticization practices.

#### **2.5.4 A “New Man”**

The New Man has been described by the scholarship of consumer and gender research as a caring and sensitive heterosexual male, often referred to as an inverted version of a macho man, who opts for nurturing activities and is not afraid to reveal his emotions (Cornwall and Lindisfarne, 1994b; Pompper, 2010), be fashion-orientated (Craik, 1993; Edwards, 2003) and self-caring (MacKay, Mikosza and Hutchins, 2005). Edwards (2003) agrees with Craik (1993) that this new male identity emerged as an outcome of feminism and re-evaluation of masculinity. Feminism brought to light many

negative characteristics of men, and especially critiqued the notion of machismo (Craik, 1993). As a result, the concept of masculinity was enriched with the new traits – nurturance and narcissism (Craik, 1993; Woodruffe-Burton, 1998).

Appearance and narcissism are the focal points in the identity of the New Man, who is fashion orientated and immerses himself into consumption for the pursuit of the ideal self (Craik, 1993). As Craik (1993) highlights, in the 1980s with the influence of the media and popular culture, men's bodies became the objects of gaze and sexual attraction, enhanced through the consumption of fashion. The male interviewees in research by Woodruffe-Burton (1998) share a similar image to the one that Craik (1993) has presented. Shopping for clothes, which at times can cross the boundaries of balanced consumption, is an inseparable part of these male identities that need to indulge in buying for psychological reasons (i.e. to cope with loss) or in the search of self-concept. Often exhibiting the behaviour of addictive shopping, they use clothing to construct a self through compensatory consumption (Woodruffe-Burton, 1998).

As Evans (1989) suggests, “fashion can be almost the ideal product for expressing physical and psychological aspects of self, and one of the best for reflecting changes in health, diet, exercise and grooming” (p. 13). According to Evans (1989), the changing sex roles supported new attitudes of fashion in consumers. Drawing on Evans (1989), a conclusion can be made that a growing interest in physical appearance is possibly the desire for individuality, and this trend or shift in self-understanding affects both female and male consumers today.

## **2.5.5 A metrosexual**

### **2.5.5.1 The term of metrosexuality**

The term “metrosexuality” first appeared in the popular press in 1994. It was introduced by the British cultural critic Mark Simpson in his article “Here come the Mirror Men”. The typical metrosexual male, as Simpson (1994) defines, is a young and single city man, spending his income on improving his body image. Such a portrayal of the metrosexual was widely accepted and analysed even in scholarly literature (Avery, 2012; Castelo-Branco, Huezo and Lagarda, 2008; Coad, 2008; Tuncay and Otnes, 2008).

As evidence, Castelo-Branco, Huezo and Lagarda (2008) provide a very similar portrait of a new type of postmodern male, placing the same emphasis, as Simpson (1994;

2002) did before, on the age, social status and the urban living space, which guarantees easier accessibility to desirable services for the purposes of leisure and the improvement of one's appearance. Similarly, Coad (2008) describes a metrosexual as a male consumerist under the age of thirty, living in metropolis, where the ideal conditions exist for attracting attention. For Avery (2012), the metrosexual is an alternative male identity to traditional manhood. It enables male consumers to pursue activities that have not been part of the male gender roles in the past. "Through their countercultural consumption, metrosexuals redefined the boundaries of masculine consumption by disarticulating practices that were previously associated with women and homosexuals and resignifying them as appropriate for heterosexual men" (Avery, 2012, p. 323). Hence, it can be argued that the emergence of the metrosexual male identity deconstructs gender and signifies a shift towards androgyny in consumption, proliferated by postmodernism (Avery, 2012; Featherstone, 2007).

#### **2.5.5.2 The prototype of "les Precieux" and Dandy**

Although metrosexuality can be linked to postmodernity and could be regarded as an outcome of this art-cultural movement in the late twentieth century, there is one premise, which allows scholars to suggest that the metrosexual is not an invention of postmodernism and the consumer culture. There is a view, which argues that metrosexuals have already existed in antecedent centuries albeit under a different name. For example, in France an image of the new male, who was called "les Precieux", had already existed since the seventeenth century (Kimmel and Tissier-Desbordes, 2000). The French "les Precieux" means "the precious" and this type of the self-concerned man could be considered as a prototype of the contemporary metrosexual, but in the French cultural context. Such connotation could be drawn from the similarities that these two types of men possess, which are the feminine clothing style and manners.

Another version of "the precious" or the metrosexual probably would be the "Victorian Dandy", whose image has been described in detail in the study by Kaye (2009). As Kaye (2009) suggested, these two male figures "interrogate conventional conceptions of masculinity and the homo/hetero binary that defines those concepts" (p. 107). Kaye (2009) notices similarities in the performances of these two male identities, with dandy being interested in his beauty and the metrosexual focusing on his image. They both create their identities through the commodity culture by acquiring things (i.e. clothing,

styling products or footwear) that can make them flaunt, and these are specifically designed for making one look better.

The nineteenth century dandy and the twentieth century metrosexual are both the “nonnormative masculinities”, interested in self-fashioning (Kaye, 2009). According to Kaye (2009), in the Victorian era the commodity culture was equally relevant in forming one’s identity, as it is in contemporary times. Hence, both aesthetes do their gender differently and enhance their physical appearance by acquiring image-improving products (Kaye, 2009). The similarity between them is also observed in their financial status, since to sustain one’s image to a pleasing level requires affluence.

Resemblance in affluence between the mentioned identities have also been noticed and discussed by the originator of the concept “metrosexual”. Simpson (2004) identified both of them as exclusive categories. Yet, the antecedent self-conscious man belonged to the aristocracy, while nowadays the boundaries of social class for the metrosexual are more malleable and consequently accessible for the mass consumer (Simpson, 2004).

#### **2.5.5.3 Characteristics of metrosexuality**

Based on the views expressed in the literature, the most salient features of the metrosexual are narcissism and an explicitly expressed interest in improving one’s physical appearance. As McCormack (2010) outlines, metrosexuality carries multiple meanings and is associated with fashion, vanity and the objectification of men. Similarly, Hall *et al.* (2012) accord that narcissism and vanity are closely related to the identities of metrosexuals, whilst Coad (2008) next to the aforementioned traits attributes exhibitionism and passivity, stating that such qualities narrow the gap between the male and female genders. The mentioned characteristics reflect the metrosexual’s ambitious desire to improve his physical appearance to a very pleasing level.

Nevertheless, there has been some disagreement over the interpretation of the characteristics of the metrosexual. While the majority of sources about metrosexual male identities evaluated the behaviour and attitudes of the metrosexual as narcissistic, Salzman, Matathia and O’Reilly (2005), in contrast, interpreted the metrosexual’s aesthetical acts as boosting his self-confidence and helping to reveal his “feminine side”. At the same time, this type of behaviour was thought to be breaking

the rules of machismo and allowing the self to become a self-absorbing consumer. “Rather than adhere to the strictures of their fathers’ generation, they are willing to move beyond rigid gender roles and pursue their interests and fancies regardless of societal pressures against them” (Salzman, Matathia and O’Reilly, 2005, p. 56).

It has been common practice to attribute such traits to the concern of female consumers (Coad, 2008; Hall *et al.* 2012; Pompper, 2010), since women have been known for many years as the pursuers of the body beautiful (Woodruffe-Burton and Ireland, 2012). Metrosexuals share similar interests with the female gender, when it comes to constructing self-identities. They aesthetically construct their identities and bodies by engaging in the activities normally attributed to the domain of women. However, as gender and consumer research outlines, the consequences for deconstructing the male gender order are twofold. First, this change in male gender ideals witnesses the objectification of males (McCormack, 2010; Pompper, 2010). For instance, men are increasingly depicted as sex objects in the male lifestyle magazines. The male readers are constantly exposed to attractive images of male models, suggesting that it is important to follow the new standards of physical appearance that have always been applied to women in the past (Conseur, Hathcote and Kim, 2008; Davis, 2002; Elliott and Elliott, 2005; McCormack, 2010; McKay, Mikosza and Hutchins, 2005; Schroeder and Zwick, 2004). Empirical evidence suggests that nakedness is increasingly recognised by consumers as a tool of marketing to attract their attention (Elliott and Elliott, 2005).

Yet, conversely, the emergence of a man, who recognises his femininity, may signify an allegory to a crisis in traditional masculinity (Kaye, 2009). Kaye (2009) suggests that:

*metrosexuality points towards the breakdown of discreet boundaries, towards the continuity and fluidity of sex and gender roles. It denaturalizes gender categories, exposes them as social constructs, and perhaps even gestures toward the dissolution of the sex/gender system.*

(p. 109)

Conseur, Hathcote and Kim (2008) contribute to this view, stating that the emergence of metrosexual masculinity not only changes consumer culture but also gives ground for negotiating gender roles.

However, another view exists, which asserts that it is not only metrosexuals who find themselves engaged in “feminine” behaviour or, in other words, aestheticizing body



practices. A tendency is noticed among contemporary manhood to be more preoccupied with their physical appearance. For example, Edwards (2006) adds that in general men are more concerned about their own and other men's physical looks rather than women's. This possibly suggests that consumer culture, together with the influence of postmodernism and the media, exalts the cult of the aesthetically looking body, changes the understanding of male gender and its roles and is making them more malleable. It could be argued that this cultural environment sets the tone for more tolerance for new trends in male grooming practices.

#### **2.5.5.4 Complexity of the term**

The review of the literature on metrosexuality highlights the complexity and multidimensionality of this term. The definition of the metrosexual, proposed by Simpson (1994), has been interpreted in numerous ways, thus, consequently the differing presentations of the metrosexual consumer created confusion, misinterpretation and a lot of disputes among scholars. This generally applies to the sexual orientation of the metrosexuals. Scholars, as the evidence shows, closely relate the self-concerned metrosexuals to the binary oppositions of hetero and homo.

#### **Disputes over sexual orientation of metrosexual**

Despite the tendency to accept the term metrosexuality, proposed by Simpson (1994; 2002), there is a strong disagreement within consumer and gender literature over the sexual orientation of the metrosexual. In general, male identities, whose practices signify femininity, are often presumed to be gay. This association was registered in the majority of scholarly texts, examining men's new grooming practices. Nevertheless, in relation to metrosexuality, the dispute goes further, given that some researchers see such males as explicitly heterosexuals (Flocker, 2003; Tuncay and Otnes, 2008; Salzman, Matathia and O'Reilly, 2005), while other academics follow the notion, set by Simpson (1994, 2002), in treating the sexual orientation of the metrosexual as totally irrelevant (Coad, 2008; Castelo-Branco, Huezo and Lagarda, 2008).

The statement of Simpson (2002) with regards to the sexual orientation of the metrosexual has been interpreted differently in the past. This trend started with the two surveys, conducted in the United States and the United Kingdom in 2003 by the global marketing and communications agency "Euro RSCG Worldwide". Salzman, Matathia and O'Reilly (2005), who carried out the research project on behalf of the RSCG group, argued that the metrosexual is a heterosexual male. However, Coad (2008) perceives

the exclusion of non-normative sexuality from the metrosexuality concept as intolerance to the queerness of this social phenomenon. "This definition shows a desire to link metrosexuality with a monolithic normative sexuality and in doing so iron out anything queer as being irrelevant to the subject" (Coad, 2008, p. 27).

However, Salzman, Matathia and O'Reilly (2005) were not the only ones to object Simpson's (1994, 2002) version of metrosexuality. For instance, Flocker (2003) also overtly disagrees with Simpson (1994; 2002) and defines the metrosexual as a twenty-first-century trendsetter, who is straight, urban and an aesthete, sophisticated and confident in himself to embrace his femininity and engage in various interests, often diverging from the normative male behaviour.

Nevertheless, Simpson (2002) gave a clear statement about the sexual orientation of metrosexuals. According to him, a sexual preference is not of high importance, since metrosexuals can be of different sexual orientation: heterosexual, homosexual or bisexual. Perceiving one's sexual orientation as trivial signifies a new binary opposition. In the view of Kaye (2009), a gender-bending metrosexuality contradicts traditional masculinity, which disrupts the social order and the binary of the traditional/transgressive masculinities.

In contrast, McCormack (2010) objects the notion of treating the sexual orientation of the metrosexual as trivial. For McCormack, the sexuality of the metrosexual should be the central point in the realms of gender and consumer research. According to him, nowadays the phenomenon of metrosexuality is more often practiced by men of the younger generation, for which sexuality continues to be of primary importance.

### **Association with homosexuals**

Another controversy that has escalated within the literature on the metrosexual consumer is its association with homosexuals. The cause of such dispute in the literature could be attributed to the specific characteristic of the metrosexual. According to Simpson (1994, 2002), this type of the male treats himself as the love object and receives satisfaction from being looked at and admired. Hence, admiration received from others, regardless of whether they are women or men, is of primary importance to the metrosexual. In the essay, Simpson (2002) provides some details from an interview with David Beckham, known as the icon of metrosexuality, where the former English footballer revealed being the least concerned about the source of the rapture, whether they are female or male admirers.

It can be argued that this specific trait brings metrosexuality closer to homosexuality, given that the heterosexual man does the looking, while the homosexual, on the contrary, prefers to be looked at (Coad, 2008). The main difference between the heterosexual man and the metrosexual counterpart is that the former sees himself in the role of the breadwinner and the competitor (Pompper, 2010), whereas the latter individual is interested in his own image and receives pleasure from being observed (Simpson, 1994, 2002). "It's passive where it should always be active, desired where it should always be desiring, looked at where it should always be looking" (Coad, 2008, p. 21). Hence, this queerness, identified in the metrosexual, dismantles the binary of the heteronormative/non-heteronormative social order.

On the other hand, metrosexuals are closely associated with being gay because Simpson (1994) believed that the metrosexual is an aftermath of a commercial model tested on gay men. In the view of Coad (2008), metrosexuals have been linked to homosexuals due to the similarity in their lifestyles rather than sexual orientation. However, later critics forgot Simpson's reason for this association and some started labelling metrosexual men as homosexuals.

Among other reasons, why metrosexuals are associated with non-heterosexuals is the understanding that both types of males share similar traits, for example, narcissism and an interest in physical looks (Edwards, 2006; Hall *et al.* 2012). Edwards (2006) argues that the phenomenon of metrosexuality, introduced by Simpson (1994), weakens the differentiation line between homosexuals and metrosexuals since they are both narcissistic and express their interest in practices improving physical appearance. A view also exists that both types of masculinities are alike because both of them contravene heteronormativity and distinct themselves as marginalised categories (Hall and Gough, 2011; Hall *et al.* 2012).

One of the latest studies about metrosexuals reflects the dispute that engaged scholars for two decades. The research, carried out by Hall *et al.* (2012), aimed to bring more clarity between the two binaries – metrosexuality/homosexuality and metrosexuality/heterosexuality. This was achieved by specifically focusing on the distinction between metrosexuality and homosexuality and the link between metrosexuality with heterosexuality. According to Hall *et al.* (2012), the "metrosexual avowal walks a fine line between rejecting traditional masculinized practices (e.g. disinterest in appearance) and invoking other masculinized ideals (e.g. autonomy, self-discipline)" (p. 398). This empirically based statement suggests that although

metrosexuality is closely linked to homosexuality due to effeminacy and narcissism, it appears to be the construction of male identity, evidently embraced by heterosexuals. Yet, masculinities continue to be constructed in relation to the influential form of hegemonic masculinity and by mixing various categories; thus, they are not fixed and even less predictable than before (Hall *et al.* 2012).

### **Metrosexuality is a lifestyle**

Nevertheless, it was suggested that metrosexuality should be separated from gender and sexuality and could serve as a lifestyle (Allen *et al.* 2004; Coad, 2008). Coad (2008) notes that this social phenomenon can go beyond standardised bipolar categorisations, such as masculine/feminine and hetero/homo divides and can exist as an “asexual personal aesthetic”. It is a “lifestyle or an art of living” and this is the reason why metrosexuality has been mainly promoted in men’s lifestyle magazines or TV programmes about makeovers (Coad, 2008). Coad (2008) encourages both genders to practice metrosexuality because the desire to be physically attractive is not necessarily the sign of a specific sexual orientation.

In summary, the review of the up-to-date literature on metrosexuals suggests that the term “metrosexuality” brings new insights into the perception of gender norms. For example, Coad (2008) is of the opinion that the sexual orientation of the metrosexual should be the last concern, giving priority to other issues when describing a male:

*Metrosexuality is replacing traditional and conventional masculinity norms. It may in time become itself the new norm, transforming the way men treat their bodies, how they interact with women, and how they perceive non-normative sexualities. The metrosexual future is one in which men demonstrate more human and more humane values.*

(Coad, 2008, p.198)

### **2.5.6 Other masculinities**

Since the emergence of hegemonic masculinity, the macho, the New Man and the metrosexual male identities scholars have proposed other versions of masculinity, and this shows that masculinity is never single-sided but multiple. These are the New Lad, orthodox masculinity and inclusive masculinity, which all will be briefly introduced in the following subsections of this chapter.

### 2.5.6.1. The New Lad

The New Lad is a contrast to the New Man described previously (Edwards, 2003; Ricciardelli, Clow and White, 2010). As social research suggests, this model of masculinity has emerged in the 1990s in Britain and Australia as a media product (Edwards, 2003; Jackson, Stevenson and Brooks (2001); McKay, Mikosza and Hutchins, 2005), encouraging young men to engage in style and lifestyle consumption (Nixon, 2001). Scholars record that the New Man model has been criticised for being dishonest and overly narcissist (McKay, Mikosza and Hutchins, 2005). If this model of masculinity was associated with the soft qualities, laddism on the opposite emphasised all the extreme characteristics of hegemonic masculinity: alcohol consumption, taking risks, the use of inappropriate language (McKay, Mikosza and Hutchins, 2005), objectification of women and promiscuous sexual prowess (Jackson, Stevenson and Brooks, 2001). Hence, this type of male identity was typically the best target for the tobacco, alcohol and sex industries (Edwards, 2003). By being deeply concerned about not appearing 'faggy' or effeminate, the new lad immersed in the activities that were far from similar to the self-conscious New Man (Edwards, 2003).

As observed by scholars, men's magazines were one of the most influential media sources for evoking the culture of laddism. Jackson, Stevenson and Brooks (2001) assert that men's lifestyle periodicals like *Loaded*, *Ralph* and *FHM* were promoting "new laddism" to the young and heterosexual male audience by encouraging them to engage in brave and manly practices. Hence, the content of these magazines was predominantly comprised of health, grooming, alcohol, "boys' toys", commodities and images of women that were supposed to be looked at (McKay, Mikosza and Hutchins, 2005). Even the images of men were conveying the true masculinity, such as always being active, which is the opposite of feminine passivity (McKay, Mikosza and Hutchins, 2005). Nevertheless, at the same time the printed media counselled men on health issues, mainly related to ageing, and thus provided sections on health, body care and grooming (Jackson, Stevenson and Brooks, 2001).

Although, Edwards (2003) describes the New Man and the New Lad as completely opposite male figures, due to their attitude to physical appearance and fashion, other sources argue that the latter activities are exactly those traits, shared by both models of consumerist masculinity (Jackson, Stevenson and Brooks, 2001; Ricciardelli, Clow and White, 2010). Nevertheless, Edwards (2003) disagrees and asserts that real men are less concerned about the way they look and are more interested in *doing* things,

like working or playing sport. Nixon (2001), however, refers to the New Lad and the New Man as distinct cultural scripts used by the media for improving the image of the British man, who was often labelled as outlandish or homosexual.

Men's magazines, by depicting men's bodies as needing to be managed and fixed through specific activities (Jackson, Stevenson and Brooks, 2001) arguably can destabilize men's perceptions of masculinity and the male body ideals, given that next to the images of the New Lad the media equally promoted the New Man (McKay, Mikosza and Hutchins, 2005). Ostberg (2012) suggests that the trend of "new masculinity" reappears due to the influence of the media, which brings up a new "marketized" concept of "being a man" every now and again, however, contemporary consumers are fully aware that these are the marketing strategies for creating attractive market segments for potential consumers.

#### **2.5.6.2 Orthodox masculinity**

Recently Anderson (2009) introduced a term "orthodox masculinity", which defines masculinities that are esteemed in sport. Orthodox masculinity with its characteristics can easily remind the Connell's (1995) "hegemonic masculinity". Nevertheless, as Anderson (2009) states, the term orthodox masculinity has been chosen to mark an archetype, whilst hegemonic masculinity is all about the social process of subordination and stratification.

Men embodying orthodox masculinity explicitly demonstrate their heterosexuality and hypermasculinity in the public domain and observe the sexual and gendered performances of their peers by commenting on their behaviour and by ridiculing those that go astray from the orthodox scripts of male ideals (Adams, Anderson and McCormack, 2010). Nevertheless, this masculinity appears to be performed only within the field of sport game as orthodox attributes, such as the notions of misogyny, homophobia and femophobia, are abandoned with the completion of the game or the training session, while hegemonic masculinity is continually practiced in other social environments (Adams, Anderson and McCormack, 2010).

#### **2.5.6.3 Inclusive masculinity**

An alternative to the concept of hegemonic masculinity is the term "inclusive masculinity", proposed again by Anderson (2009). McCormack (2010) suggests, it is a

social constructionist theory of masculinity, which builds on the Connell's (1995) concept of hegemonic masculinity, whilst at the same time challenges its predecessor. However, in the view of Nagel (2010), the newly emerged form of manliness neither challenges the hegemonic masculinity, nor does it compete with it. It could be argued that this form of masculinity marks the advancement of the phenomenon itself given that inclusive masculinity embraces both the characteristics of masculinity and femininity. For this reason, it deserves a title of the tolerant form of masculinity, as it is not afraid of stigmatisation for behaviours alluding to femininity or homosexuality. More importantly, this concept embraces non-heteronormativity, which, as suggested, can be practiced by both the homosexual, as well as more privileged heterosexual male identities, desiring and engaging in the acts with sex identities, yet maintaining the status of the strait guy (Nagel, 2010).

However, as Nagel (2010) indicates, the inclusive masculinity is similar to the hegemonic form of masculinity for the privileged status of the men that represent or practice the newly form of masculinity. The characteristics of those embodying inclusive masculinity are the same as those who practice hegemonic masculinity – white, heterosexual athletes from the middle to upper economic class. Nevertheless, the difference that separates the new and the old version of masculinity is the tolerance to men's practices. In the view of Nagel (2010), inclusive masculinity guarantees men that their homosexual, homoerotic and effeminate activities will not be socially punished, thus in this way, inclusive masculinities challenge the dominant discourse of masculinity and opens up a debate, whether masculinity should always be discussed in comparison to femininity or homosexuality.

Similarly, positive feedback about the recently proposed term has been received from Warin (2013). He refers to inclusive masculinity as a softened version of masculinity and suggests it has potentiality for fresh and transformative thinking about gender practices. Indeed, men of a new generation reject homophobia and misogyny, created by anti-homosexuality and anti-femininity respectively. Therefore, treat them as out-dated by openly accepting same sex relationships (Anderson, 2009).

## **2.6 Influence of sociocultural norms**

Since this research set as its goal the investigation of how sociocultural norms, in this case current perceptions of masculinity influence male spa consumer behaviour, and takes the standpoint that participants create meanings through social interactions, the

discussion that follows will finalise the notion of culture and its conditioning effects on consumer behaviour.

The literature of marketing already turned its attention to the impact of culture on consumption patterns at the turn of the last century. For example, its complexity, pervasiveness and effect on consumer behaviour were mentioned by Costa (1994b). She argued that humans from a very early age require social contact for survival and develop this interaction by imitating the behaviour of others. Knowledge about an appropriate demeanour is being passed onto others through “symbols, constructs and systems” (Costa, 1994b, p. 4). Therefore, in simple terms, culture can be called “everything that is learned”, comprising of “customs, traditions, behaviours, rituals, morals, values and so on” (Costa, 1994b, p. 4). In agreement, Firat (1994) stated that the interrelationship between consumption and gender is undeniable given that contemporary society has been deeply affected by it. For example, as Firat (1994) asserts, in the past the spheres of life have been divided into the private, where it was consumed and into the public, where it was produced. Women played their roles in the domestic domain, while men took the role of breadwinners, which explains why men until now are reluctant to embrace consumption into their routines.

Almost two decades later empirical evidence is consistent with the preceding results, thus contributing towards the notion of gender impact on consumption. In the luxury brand consumption context, Stokburger-Sauer and Teichmann’s (2013) study argues that women’s attitude to luxury is more positive than men’s. Furthermore, whilst women prefer hedonic offline shopping, male consumers tend to engage in hedonic online purchasing (Davis, Lang and San Diego, 2014). These authors agree with the literature, which assigns different patterns in consumption to gender roles. It was suggested in the previous section of this chapter that men are performance-motivated and driven by agentic goals; while in contrast women are interdependent and building communal relationships. This tendency still exists nowadays despite the blurring gender roles. Consequently, women tend to engage in more conspicuous consumption as a means of increasing their attractiveness (Stokburger-Sauer and Teichmann, 2013). Similarly, Avery (2012) extends this notion in brand narratives, suggesting that cultural discourses impact upon the way men behave as consumers, who try to avoid gender-bending consumption and brands.

If culture consists of everything we learn, then all the processes of consumption, including consumer behaviour, are subject to the influence of culture (Costa, 1994b).



For this reason, a consumer behaviour study cannot be carried out without examining the impact of culture on the way consumers behave today. Such notions support the aim of this research to explore the motives of male spa customers for acquiring services, typically evaluated as “feminine”, through the lens of gender, which, as scholars agree, is an integral part of culture (Costa, 1994a, b; Hofstede, 1984). In doing so, the study will employ a qualitative approach in order to obtain an insight into the present consumption patterns of male spa goers and at the same time will be able to meet its objectives and contribute to consumer behaviour literature with a fresh insight into experiential consumption .

The research question *“How do current perceptions of masculinity influence the UK male spa customers’ motives to engage in practices enhancing one’s physical appearance and wellbeing?”* will be answered through the use of the grounded theory approach in this doctoral study (see Chapter 3). The gathered data is expected to not only bring more advanced knowledge into experiential consumption, but also to develop a theory in relation to men’s motives for so-called “feminine” practices. The qualitative research perspective and the principles of data collection and analysis will be discussed in the following Chapter 3 Methodology.

## **2.7 Chapter summary**

This chapter was written to meet the research objective, contributing to the main research question:

How do current perceptions of masculinity influence the UK male spa customers’ motives to engage in practices enhancing one’s physical appearance and wellbeing?

By providing the up-to-date postmodern conceptualisations of masculinity, found in the gender and consumer behaviour literature, this chapter gave an insight into the available forms of masculinity that can be practiced by men today. In addition, the review of consumer, gender research and organisation studies showed that the concept of masculinity is closely linked to the sociocultural norms or, in other words, the gender norms, affecting not only the perceptions of masculinity, but also men’s social practices. Furthermore, the discussion of the influence of postmodernism on the consumption patterns of contemporary society gave a better understanding why today a growing number of men embark of the journey of self-actualisation through self-

aestheticization. Finally, the chapter concluded with the notion of the culture impact on consumption practices that the marketing literature had addressed a few decades ago.

# Chapter 3: Research Methodology

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## 3.1 Introduction

This chapter is an overview of the research design adopted in this doctoral project. The study employs a qualitative approach aimed at answering the research question, using interpretivism as a general philosophical orientation. More specifically, the theoretical perspective adopted conveys the symbolic interactionist view about the social world and explains the social constructionist's epistemological position about knowledge and how it is delivered to others. Since constructionism does not make any ontological claims and defines itself as the philosophy of knowledge construction (Andrews, 2012), this thesis will not discuss the researcher's ontological views per se in a separate section but will include them within a discussion of the epistemological viewpoint. The following sections in this chapter will then introduce the research methodology and methods used in this doctoral work, will give details about the location of interviews, the recruitment of participants, the approach to data analysis and finally, the scientific evaluation of research. Reflexivity will be considered as a closing point in this chapter.

## 3.2 Qualitative research

Prior to discussing the philosophical paradigm and the epistemology of this study, it is essential to introduce the specifications of qualitative research as the nature of research determines the philosophical view. A dichotomy prevails in the way researchers gather knowledge about reality and that opposition is known under the names of quantitative and qualitative research. The latter differs from the tenets of quantitative studies by the adopted approach to data gathering and analysis. For example, Pope and Mays (2006) argue that qualitative researchers are interested in the nature of social phenomena, and, therefore, never simply accept the existing concepts, but seek fresh insights into social issues by recording people's thoughts and experiences through various methods such as observation, communication (interviews, focus groups) or texts (diaries).

The necessity for qualitative inquiry has been acknowledged by various scholars (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011; Pope and Mays, 2006). For instance, Hennink, Hutter and Bailey (2011) argue that qualitative research is irreplaceable in exploring people's behaviour and beliefs, social and cultural norms, new topics or issues that are

complex. In addition, qualitative research enables the enquirer to penetrate social processes or sensitive social situations that are difficult to access for quantitative investigators (Pope and Mays, 2006).

The current doctoral research has been undertaken in the consumer behaviour field for the aforementioned reasons. Firstly, the concept of masculinity has scarcely been explored in consumer research, particularly in the context of men's body aestheticization, while at the same time none of the studies had looked in depth into spa consumption trends from the perspective of male visitors. Secondly, although men are concerned about their health, wellbeing and physical appearance (as discussed in Chapter 1), the male market segment is still classed as an untapped spa clientele. Thus, access to this particular consumer group appears to be problematic, and this justifies the researcher's decision to collect men's perspectives through qualitative research using interpretivism as the philosophy for this study.

### **3.3 Interpretivism**

This doctoral study employs the philosophical perspective of interpretivism because the researcher believes that insights into social realities can be gained through interpretations of the studied participants. This is in line with the scholarly view that interpretivists aim to understand reality and the constructions of meanings in certain social settings through experiences and interpretations of individuals that become the focus of the study (Hallebone and Priest, 2009; Neuman, 2011).

The paradigm of interpretivism, which originated in the nineteenth century, contradicts positivism in the description of human and social reality (Burrell and Morgan, 2008; Crotty, 1998). In opposition to positivism, interpretivism views the world as socially constructed (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011) in the cultural and historical contexts (Crotty, 1998; Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011), and explains it from the point of view of those directly involved in the particular social process under investigation (Burrell and Morgan, 2008; Della Porta and Keating, 2008; Locke, 2001; Willis, 2007). Therefore, reality is perceived to be subjective (Hallebone and Priest, 2009; Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011; Locke, 2001; Neuman, 2011). Through social interactions people create meanings that serve to explain social reality from their point of view. For this reason, the main task of the interpretivist is to discover these meanings, given that they carry the power to describe the lives of social actors, who are directly involved in the field under investigation.

Through a direct approach in the form of interviews, this interpretivist study aims to unveil how people form and apply the meanings of masculinity in the consumption context of spa services. By knowing the subjective motives and opinions of the social actors in relation to their actions, this research can develop theoretical explanations about men's motives for consuming spas in the North East of England. Not long ago these activities were very much associated with the feminine prerogative (Barber, 2008; Davis, 2002; Kaye, 2009; Ricciardelli, 2011; Tuncay and Otnes, 2008), and this raises a genuine question about what motivates men from the North East to enhance their wellbeing and physical appearance through spa services. This depth of knowledge about how masculinity is constructed and reconstructed, and how it affects male spa consumer practices will be explained through the lens of the epistemological perspective that this study employs.

### **3.4 Research epistemology**

Scholarly literature defines epistemology as the theory of knowledge. This term provides a general outlook of our understanding about what we know and explains how knowledge should be understood and communicated to others (Hallebone and Priest, 2009, Neuman, 2011). Furthermore, the epistemological stance of the researcher determines what theoretical perspective, methodology and methods are suitable for the study (Crotty, 1998; Henn, Weinstein and Foard, 2009). Thus, by discussing the choice of epistemological position, this study will be able to meet the following research objectives:

- To select a methodology, which reflects the researcher's ontological and epistemological views, including the overall research theoretical perspective and provide an insight into the motives of research participants for spa services, enhancing physical appearance and wellbeing (addressed in Chapter 4);
- To use appropriate methodological tools to collect and analyse data addressing the research question.

The adopted epistemological perspective of this research is social constructionism. This theory of knowledge was created by sociologists and, as a result, is more associated with this scholarly domain (Best, 2008). Nevertheless, from the 1960s constructionism was successfully applied in various social sciences and it has been

embraced in psychology (Gergen and Gergen, 2008; Young and Collin, 2004; Stead, 2004), political science (Schneider and Ingram, 2008), education (Wortham and Jackson, 2008) and also business research, including management (Fairhurst and Grant, 2010; Carroll and Levy, 2010), entrepreneurship (Fletcher, 2006; Lindgren and Packendorff, 2009) and industrial marketing (Järvensivu and Åke-Törnroos, 2010).

Social constructionism is defined as “the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context” (Crotty, 1998, p. 42). Hence, from the point of view of constructionists, the actual world including its meanings are not predefined or pre-given as objectivists claim (Bryman, 2012; Gubrium and Holstein, 2008), discovered or created but constructed collectively through daily interactions (Bryman, 2012; Crotty, 1998; Gubrium and Holstein, 2008; Hallebone and Priest, 2009; Lindgren and Packendorff, 2009; Staller, 2010). For this reason, the actual meaning of an object or situation appears when human consciousness comes into play (Crotty, 1998). Without human consciousness and experience the world would not have any meaning (Crotty, 1998). This argument explains the ontological researcher’s perspective implying that the meaning of social reality is very much dependent on and created through social interactions and experiences.

There is a view that the meanings of social reality are constructed through language. The latter becomes a tool through which people express their assumptions about the world and how it can be experienced (Andrews, 2012; Hallebone and Priest, 2009). Therefore, experiences are multiple interpretations (Neuman, 2011). The perceptions of the world are intersubjectively and socially negotiated, developed and converted into concepts that manifest through behavioural and observational experiences (Hallebone and Priest, 2009). Thus, masculine values from the point of view of research informants can be very much the corollary of gender norms that prevail in current British society.

The purpose of constructionist studies is to show that reality is not universal and fixed, but fluid and socially constructed in a specific socio-historical context (Weinberg, 2008). On the other side of the spectrum, positivism provides a completely different view of the world, which is perceived to be objective and consisting of facts (Bryman, 2012; Crotty, 1998; Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011; Weinberg, 2008). As Crotty (1998) explains, it exists separately from the consciousness or experience of a human

being. Thus, knowledge is treated as neutral and not influenced by the presence of the researcher and his/her interaction with research participants (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011; Lindgren and Packendorff, 2009). Constructionism criticises the positivistic way to discover an objective truth through a hypothesis that converts observed realities into unjustified and fixed definitions of things (Weinberg, 2008).

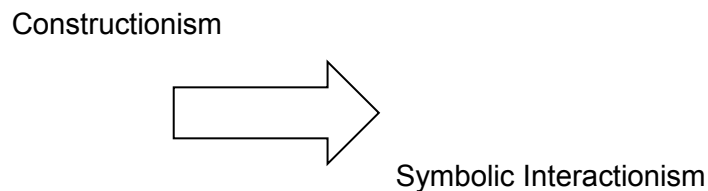
According to Weinberg (2008), an attempt to discover the universal truth is less useful than an attempt to find out natural ways of how we approach and maintain or change certain perceptions and concepts. A discovery of the “universal truth can also be downright harmful, because it encourages us to think fatalistically about the status quo and to naturalize aspects of our existence that are not inevitable and that ought to be challenged and changed” (Weinberg, 2008, p. 15). The view of Weinberg (2008) echoes the general tendency among gender scholars to present masculinity as fluid and changing due to economic, social and historical developments within society (see Chapter 2). Therefore, this thesis with the lens of constructionist epistemology can bring fresh insight into consumer behaviour and gender studies by providing constructed knowledge about current masculine values and their impact on men’s spa consumption practices.

Methodological literature supports this idea. Bryman (2012) agrees that masculinity is a social construction and its meaning varies depending on time and space. An argument also exists that our lives are guided by the value system, which we construct, reconstruct and embrace as we go along (Bryman, 2012; Morris, 2006). If meanings of masculinity are constructed and embraced through interactive communication (Neuman, 2011; Hallebone and Priest, 2009; Gubrium and Holstein, 2008; Staller, 2010), hence, they can be perceived as influential factors affecting men’s current consumption practices in north eastern English spas. For this reason, the epistemological lens of social constructionism employed in this research should assist in answering the research question:

How do current perceptions of masculinity influence the UK male spa customers' motives to engage in practices enhancing one’s physical appearance and wellbeing?

### 3.5 Theoretical perspective

This thesis combines the epistemology of social constructionism with symbolic interactionism, perceived by Crotty (1998) as a theoretical perspective that is in line with the epistemology of social constructionism (see Figure 4.1).



**Figure 3.1:** Relationship between constructionism and symbolic interactionism.  
Source: Adapted from Crotty (1998)

The theoretical perspective or paradigm defines orientation to theory and research (Neuman, 2011). Hallebone and Priest (2009) view a paradigm as a combination of philosophy and logic. Locke's (2001) description of the term paradigm is more detailed. He argues that paradigm "is a set of basic beliefs about the nature of reality, the nature of the relationship between researchers and the worlds and subjects they study, and the methods through which knowledge can be achieved" (p. 6). This reflects the statements of Crotty (1998) and Punch (2006) that the philosophical view determines the selection of methodology and the suitability of available methods for data collection. An adoption of a particular paradigm or perspective has a significant impact on how the research will be carried out (Punch, 2006). It will determine how certain phenomenon will be explored and what methods will be included in order to gain a deeper insight into the phenomenon under investigation.

#### 3.5.1 Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism is known as one of the branches of historical interpretivism (Staller, 2010), developed by scholars from Chicago University in the first part of the twentieth century (Williams, 2008). More specifically, it was derived from German phenomenology and American pragmatism (Prasad, 2005). Its foundation lies in the works of John Dewey, Charles Horton Cooley, George Herbert Mead and Herbert Blumer.



This theoretical perspective earned its title from social interaction, which uses symbolic verbal and non-verbal tools to record people's feelings and perceptions (Charmaz, 2006; Crotty, 1998; Goulding, 2005). The term symbolic interactionism consists of two words: symbol and interaction. Symbolic meaning is usually assigned to physical objects, gestures and even words that are created by humans through interactions, which give the foundation for culture to emerge (Williams, 2008). "Interactionists understand culture to be the ideas, objects and practices that constitute everyday life" (Williams, 2008, p. 849).

A social interaction is a dynamic and an interpretive process, reflecting how human beings construct, share, resist or modify meanings and actions in the social world (Charmaz, 2006; Williams, 2008). This shows that symbolic interactionists are concerned with the subjective and constructed interpretations of social life rather than the objective (Berg, 2008) and are not aiming to definitely explain or predict it (Williams, 2008). Furthermore, interactionists believe that social actors construct their behaviour based on the actions and reactions of other people (Berg, 2008).

#### **3.5.1.1 Self-perception in symbolic interactionism**

Pragmatist George H. Mead is known for developing ideas of symbolic interactionism and placing the biggest emphasis on the idea that human beings understand their self and see themselves through the eyes of other people (Locke, 2001; Prasad, 2005). This in agreement with Blumer (1969), who argued that symbolic interactionism rests on a few premises:

- Action is taken on the basis of what meanings the objects hold for them;
- Meanings derive from social interaction;
- Meanings are handled in and modified through an interpretive process.

Blumer (1969, p.2)

Mead believed that humans communicate not only with other people but also with themselves; therefore, their behaviour is a reflection of combined intrinsic and social interactions and is not a sole reaction to environmental stimulus as behaviourism claims (Williams, 2008).

According to Mead, the self consists of two components, the “I” and the “Me, and is understood through the interpretation of constant communication between the “I” and the “Me” (Aldiabat and Le Navenec, 2011). The “I” is a spontaneous and uncontrolled part of the individual or the “human subject”, whereas “Me” is perceived to be “the social self and human object” that develops through the process of social interaction with others (Aldiabat and Le Navenec, 2011, p. 1064). Hence, oneself represents the attitudes, definitions, understandings and expectations of others and behaves consciously according to the socially constructed roles (Prasad, 2005).

Given that generalized others comprise social groups, social class and even communities, attitudes tend to be similar to those of society (Aldiabat and Le Navenec, 2011). Although each of us has our own perception, social interaction can influence our interpretations, therefore, they are inter-subjective (Prasad, 2005). Even one person’s contribution to knowledge about the reality would be classed as a joint collaboration due to his/her familiarity with the perspectives of other people (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). “Because most human actions take account of other people, SI [Symbolic Interactionism] provides an inductive explanation of the creation, maintenance, and change in society” (Williams, 2008, p. 851).

Taking into consideration the main principles of symbolic interactionism about self-perception and the influence of others on our interpretations, this thesis will find out not only the key reasons for men’s engagement in practices that are known for their capacity to improve physical looks and wellness. The individualistic perception about the particular phenomena can be influenced by other people’s opinions. Therefore, the views of male spa visitors for purchasing the aforementioned services will reflect the current gender norms prevalent to society in the North East of England.

This depth of information will be gathered by employing grounded theory as a research methodology (see section 3.6) in line with epistemological and the overall research perspective (Charmaz, 2008; Layder, 1998), given that all place an emphasis on investigating the socially constructed reality. The reality in the context of this study is the male spa consumer world, that is considered to have never before received scholarly attention, and an insight into what is expected to be a valuable contribution to knowledge and practice. In particular, spa businesses would benefit from this knowledge and could create or improve their marketing strategies in order to attract the niche male market segment. The following section will speak about grounded theory as the research methodology in more detail.

## **3.6 Research methodology**

### **3.6.1 Grounded theory**

To answer the research question and meet the objectives of the empirical project undertaken here, grounded theory was selected as the research methodology. Originally, it was developed in the late 1960s by American sociologists Glaser and Strauss, as a response to criticism that more scientific procedures for data collection and analysis were missing in qualitative research. They laid the foundation for qualitative research to be acknowledged and respected, and inspired its democratisation during the time when quantitative studies thrived in the scholarly domain (Charmaz, 2008).

Grounded theory as a qualitative approach for data collection and interpretation has been adopted in various social sciences. Although originally it was developed for sociologists and has always been associated with health research (Charmaz, 1997; Chiovitti and Piran, 2003; Hunter *et al.* 2011), over the last thirty years its popularity rose and successfully entered into other areas of inquiry, such as business, management and marketing (Goulding, 2001; Goulding and Soren, 2010). More precisely, this method was successfully applied in management studies (Jones and Noble, 2007; Mento, Jones and Dirndorfer, 2002; Partington, 2000), organisational research (Rowland and Parry, 2009), consumer behaviour (Daengbuppha, Hemmington and Wilkes, 2006; Goulding, 1999b; Goulding, 2005; Goulding, 2001; Goulding and Soren, 2010), human resource development (Egan, 2002), branding and image research (Rindell, 2009), strategic marketing (Ashill, Frederikson and Davies, 2003) and industrial marketing (Wagner, Lukassen and Mahlendorf, 2010).

Grounded theory reflects theory already grounded in the mindset and actions of the investigated individuals (Charmaz, 2006; Goulding, 1999a, 2005). It focuses on the process, consisting of people's actions and interactions and provides an insight into the reality, which without the researcher's input would remain unexplained (Egan, 2002). This research methodology is particularly appropriate for consumer-based studies because the main purpose of grounded theory is to investigate the behaviour with which interactional aspects are involved (Goulding, 2005).

Furthermore, grounded theory is also suitable for studies that aim to fill a void in knowledge or where new insights into the existing understanding are required (Corbin and Strauss, 2008; Goulding, 1999a; Goulding, 2002). This is the key factor as to why

grounded theory was selected for this project. To date, consumer research has examined various motives in many different consumption contexts. However, a large gap remains in understanding men's motives for acquiring products and services that can increase one's health and physical attractiveness.

The developed theory is expected to complement the consumer behaviour, since the investigation of consumption patterns through the gender lens is still regarded as a "boutique item" within the realms of consumer research (Schroeder, 2003). Thus far, male body beautification or other activities that transcend the well-established gender norms remains a rare subject of debate in marketing studies (McNeill and Douglas, 2011; Otnes and McGrath, 2001; Woodruffe-Burton, 1998). It has been argued that grounded theory is suitable for topics which have been "relatively ignored in the literature" (Goulding, 2002, p. 55). Therefore, this research implements grounded theory to provide an up-to-date concept of masculinity and its influence on male spa consumption practices.

In various disciplines grounded theory has been employed to advance scholarly knowledge (Charmaz, 2008), and this view supports and justifies the applicability of methodology chosen in the current doctoral study, aiming to contribute towards theoretical insights into consumer behaviour. Furthermore, the route taken by other consumer scholars to construct grounded theories through interpretations of participants gives encouragement and support to perform the current research by employing the same methodology. The specific approach of grounded theory will be discussed in the section that follows.

### **3.6.2 Grounded theory approach**

This study employs a grounded theory approach, developed by Strauss and Corbin (1998). It has been critiqued for rigidly prescribed procedures, which potentially can "mute" social constructionism (Charmaz, 2008). Partington (2000) adds that overcomplicated data analysis makes it "difficult to follow in practice except in a loose, non-rigid, non-specifiable fashion which inevitably draws it back towards the original version" (Partington, 2000, p. 95).

Despite the above mentioned criticism, this study adopts Strauss and Corbin's (1998) approach to sampling, data collection and analysis. Corbin (2009) accepts the aforementioned criticism that blindly followed and applied techniques can damage a

natural flow of qualitative analysis, and hence, recommends that researchers develop a flexible and relaxed approach to observing data. Techniques are procedures; therefore they should not be treated as strictly obligatory tools that must be implemented during the analysis of information (Corbin, 2009). This echoes the view of Morse (2009), who argued that the developed theory can be constructed through application of all applicable strategies or only through the chosen ones. For this reason, grounded theory is not a prescribed method but rather “a way of thinking about data”, which is gathered through interviews and observations of everyday life (Morse, 2009).

By considering recommendations given by Corbin (2009) and Morse (2009), analytical techniques in this doctoral project will be applied as broad guidelines to stimulate analysis. On the other hand, this thesis will implement and follow all applicable step-by-step procedures. This strategy together with other grounded research requirements (i.e. openness to data collection and analysis, theoretical sampling, the development of theory by using the actual words of participants and the accurate reflection of participants' experiences) will counter attack the positivist criticism that qualitative research, including grounded theory, lacks rigour (Chiovitti and Piran, 2003; Lincoln, 2002; Morse *et al.* 2002; Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

### **3.6.3 Theory and its specifications**

The aim of grounded theory studies is to develop a theory. A theory is defined in the methodological literature as a set of concepts, definitions and propositions (Blumberg, Cooper and Schindler, 2011), assumptions and explanations (Neuman, 2011) or well-developed categories (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) that are systematically interrelated through the statements of conditional and causal relationships to draw a clearer picture about the phenomena studied in the various areas of research (Abend, 2008; Blumberg, Cooper and Schindler, 2011; Neuman, 2011; Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

A theory can be defined by its focus (substantive or formal theory), the form of explanation (causal, structural or interpretive), the direction of theorising (deductive or inductive), the level of analysis (micro, macro or meso), and its range (empirical generalisation, a middle-range theory or a framework) (Neuman, 2011). By drawing on the view of Neuman (2011), the following paragraphs will discuss the type of theory this research is aiming to develop.

The difference between the substantive and formal theories is that the former ones can be used to explain and manage problems in a specific context, while the latter theories can be applied in a wider range of settings (Glaser, 2001; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). This study aims to develop a substantive theory since it focuses on the specific context that is spa consumption by exploring the male visitors' motives for wellness and body aestheticization practices in the North East of England. Thus, it will be applied to explain the behaviour in the area of inquiry from which the data was gathered (Glaser, 2001; Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

The developed theory will provide both causal and structural explanations of behavioural patterns of male spa users through inductive and deductive theory development strategies. Grounded theory is both inductive and deductive methodology. It has an inductive logic because concepts arise from data collected, while a deductive logic is used for checking the initial theory developed through further theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 2006).

It can also be added that theories can be explanatory or descriptive (Punch, 2006). Grounded theory goes beyond description and this tenet distinguishes it from other qualitative research approaches (Locke, Silverman and Spirduso, 2010; Punch, 2006). Instead, it offers a systematic and abstract conceptual understanding about the studied phenomena (Charmaz, 2006). Thus, this PhD project is an explanatory study since it aims to explain rather than describe how spa services are consumed by men in the North East of England. Furthermore, it also seeks to find out current perceptions of masculinity and how this sociocultural factor affects male spa consumption patterns. Theoretical insights gained through empirical evidence will help to explain the social phenomenon of men's interest in practices enhancing wellbeing and physical appearance. Simultaneously, it will increase our understating of whether current masculine values have a direct impact on male gender consumption practices.

As opposed to other qualitative methods, grounded research does not begin with a theory, but provides it at the end of the investigation; hence, it is original and has been created in the particular research area (Locke, Silverman and Spirduso, 2010). For this reason, a developed theory holds strong implications in the practical world, as this theory has been created in a particular context, which increases its applicability (Locke, Silverman and Spirduso, 2010). Thus, the final product of this research is a substantive theory, specifically designed for the spa and beauty businesses in the North East region.

The following section will look at the criterion for developing a theory.

### **3.6.4 Criteria for theory development**

The criterion for developing a theory lies in the ability to “define concepts according to their specific properties and dimensions” (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 20). Conditions, which explain how, when, where and why specific individuals engage in a certain process are an important part of data analysis, since these factors determine the process of the phenomena under investigation. This view coincides with the perspective of social constructionism, which emphasises the importance of including the questions *why* and *how* in the research process to increase understanding about the studied phenomenon (Lindgren and Packendorff, 2009).

Another criterion for developing a valid and good theory, as Strauss and Corbin (1998) assert, is to include differences in sequencing or rate among the players of a certain social process since deviation in social actions is inevitable. In addition, it is important to assign groupings and theoretically explain their inter-relationship as well as their connection with the main phenomenon under study (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Strauss and Corbin (1998) view these recommendations as of great benefit to the researcher as they increase evidence that the developed theory reflects different views and perspectives.

Grounded research verifies any hypothesis that is driven from data against the coming data (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). This step modifies, extends or deletes initial assumptions in theory. The development of theory is the interplay between induction and deduction, where the development of concepts, their properties and dimensions belong to induction, while the establishment of relationships between the concepts and testing these relationships against the raw data is defined as a deductive process (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

Finally, the developed theory is supposed to reflect the overall view and behaviour of research participants rather than concentrating on an individualistic concern (Goulding, 2001). Therefore, in grounded research the patterns of action and interaction between the social actors are replicated (Goulding, 2001). Yet, the success of developing a good theory does not solely rely on procedural techniques (Partington, 2000). The researcher’s ability to conceptualise and theorise, her/his personal and professional

skills as well as knowledge of the research area are also considered as equally important while developing a theory (Partington, 2000).

### **3.6.5 Approach to theory development**

Research that adopts the grounded theory approach of Strauss and Corbin (1998) develops theory through the process of coding, which looks for properties and dimensions, conditions, actions/interactions and consequences during data analysis. Glaser (1992) criticises this way of analysing data since it overemphasises the coding process. Yet, an argument exists that a strict and rigorous process of coding, suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1998), serves as a guidance, providing some level of security, while Glaser's method encourages a dependence on theory emerging from the data, which is a fully inductive way to generate an insight (Goulding, 2002). Although theory develops through rigorous investigation of relationships between the categories, Strauss and Corbin (1998) admit that researcher's interpretations cannot be dismissed. Interpretations are unavoidable since comparative analysis depends on what the researcher sees in the data, which is part of the process of interpretation (Corbin, 1998).

#### **3.6.5.1 Theory development**

The definition of theory, its specifications and criteria for theory development have already been discussed in sub-sections 4.6.3 and 4.6.4 respectively. Therefore, the aim of this sub-section is to explain the procedure of theory development that applies specifically to grounded research.

In grounded studies theory evolves during the research process, consisting of systematic data collection and analysis carried out simultaneously (Charmaz, 2006; Goulding, 2001). Goulding and Saren (2010) highlight the importance of looking for similarities as well as for differences, given that "researchers need to account for and explain differences in behaviour" (p. 71). The process of theory development mainly occurs during the stage of selective coding when a core category (concept) is selected and compared with other categories as well as the literature (Egan, 2002) to find out if findings correspond with the existing knowledge in order to see what further information is required.



## Theoretical sampling

It could also be argued that theory development starts with *theoretical sampling*. *Theoretical sampling* is designed to gather information, which would direct the researcher towards the development of a theoretical framework. Theoretical sampling can already be employed in the early stage of data analysis once tentative categories have been developed, as it would serve in identifying relationships between the categories (Charmaz, 2006). This type of sampling directs the researcher to the places and people that can fill the gaps in the data and can lead towards saturation of categories (Charmaz, 2006; Locke, 2001) or theories (Pope, Ziebland and Mays, 2006).

However, in practical terms, theoretical sampling is also possible through returning to the data and including only those categories that have explanatory power through their integration with the literature (Goulding, 2002). Strauss and Corbin (1998) allow reorganisation of generated concepts and categories by referring back to the collected data. If a theoretically relevant person or site is not available the researcher can explore from what is available since something will always differ in terms of conditions, actions/interactions or consequences (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

Theoretical sampling continues until the data gathered reaches saturation. *Theoretical saturation* means that the collected data no longer provides new information, which could be used to refine the selected category, its properties or its relationship to other categories (Locke, 2001). Grounded theory literature outlines that data saturation begins the moment the data collection brings little contribution to the phenomenon under investigation (Daengbuppha, Hemmington and Wilkes, 2006; Egan, 2002), hence “the benefits of further analysis are marginal” (Daengbuppha, Hemmington and Wilkes, 2006, p. 384). For Strauss and Corbin (1998), theory saturation means a point where further incoming data would be counterproductive in relation to the developed theory.

This study about men’s motives for engaging in grooming and wellbeing practices in contemporary British spas employed both approaches of theoretical sampling by returning to the data and by seeking information from new participants. Its saturation was reached with interview No.9, and subsequently was refined and validated with the following participants.

## **Theory refinement**

The final part in theory development in grounded research is the *refinement* of theory. This process has been identified in the work of Strauss and Corbin (1998) as the process of filling the gaps in the categories that require further information for them to be integrated, removing those, which are just in an excess. *Validation* of the developed scheme is an equally important part of theory refinement. It is important to continue validating and complementing the developed hypothesis through the continuous checking of one incident with other incidents since a tentative theory is an abstraction on the conceptual level (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

*Theory validation* was achieved in two ways. According to Strauss and Corbin, (1998), one way is to go back to raw data and make a comparative analysis. Another way is to seek validation from the interview participants by giving them the developed theory to read (Neuman, 2011; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). “Naturally, it will not fit every aspect of each case because the theory is a reduction of data, but in the large sense, participants should be able to recognize themselves in the story that is being told” (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 159). This study has employed both techniques of theory validation – theoretical refinement and the approval sought from two previous and three new research participants. The theory derived in this study is a set of interrelated concepts reflecting the opinions of all research participants. It will be presented in Chapter 6, while the next section of this chapter provides information on the data collection methods employed in this study.

## **3.7 Research method**

### **3.7.1 Interviews**

Data about the UK male consumers’ key reasons for investing in their physical appearance and wellbeing have been gathered through semi-structured interviews with male spa clients in the North East of England. According to Willis (2007), an interview is the best qualitative method to reveal how humans perceive the world around them and is the most appropriate tool to gain more understanding in an area that has not been fully explored (Goulding, 1999a; Watt and Ricciardelli, 2012). This technique of data collection provides an opportunity for research participants to discuss the research topic from their perspective and present themselves as the social participants involved in a specific social situation (Thornberg *et al.* 2011).

At the initial data collection stage, interviews were conducted with a less structured approach. They were more flexible in order to keep the natural flow of conversation. All interviews with male spa users started with the general question “Could you tell me about your spa experience?” This question was expected to set a starting tone to the interview and let the informants select the direction of the discussion. This was then followed by questions asking interviewees to complement on their reasons for selecting spa services and provide their views on current masculine values (see Appendix A).

Although questions on seven themes were prepared in advance (see Appendix B) these were used only as a reminding point, thus the interview process was guided by a naturally emerging conversation. The themes of questions comprised men’s spa activities, the motives and rationale for giving preference to some services over others, perceptions of masculinity and their influence on consumption practices, gender roles, gendered consumption, men’s attitudes to intensive grooming and, finally, the theme of metrosexuality. The intention behind these questions was to gather the perspective of male spa users on what is classed as masculine today and seek evidence whether or not gender norms influence men’s spa purchasing decisions. The research participants were directly asked about prevalent perceptions of masculinity and what consumption practices were socially acceptable from their point of view. Additionally, men were asked if physical appearance mattered to them and why. The final theme of metrosexuality was also included, given that intensive grooming is viewed as a sign of metrosexuality (as discussed in Chapter 2). Nevertheless, the notion of metrosexuality did not emerge until the interview No. 5 and was further explored in the following interviews No. 7, No. 9 and No. 12.

Methodological literature provides two views on whether or not to give the power of control to research informants during the interviews. Britten (2006) stresses the importance of the interviewer to remain in control of the discussion. By knowing what is required and by asking the right questions the researcher stays in a leading position. However, grounded research accentuates the leading position of the research participants (Chiovitti and Piran, 2003) to avoid forcing the data. For this reason, all interviews started with a general question such as “Could you tell me about your spa experiences?” to gather the stories and experiences of every individual. Yet, the researcher’s control of the interview grew in strength at a later stage of data collection. The researcher had to collect specific information at the time of the theoretical sampling (see subsection 4.6.5.1), in order to develop a theory. Despite the shift from

less structured to more structured data gathering, interviews remained semi-structured throughout all the data collection.

### **3.7.1.1 Semi-structured interviews**

Semi-structured interviews are defined as loose-structured with open-ended questions that are utilised to explore the research area from where it turns into a more detailed examination of the situation (Britten, 2006). Semi-structured interviews give the interviewer more flexibility to change the order of questions depending on the natural conversation between the researcher and the research informant. This type of interviewing allows additional questions to be asked for probing or clarification purposes (Morris, 2006). This advice was followed throughout all the interviews.

The value of *open-ended* questions is seen in their quality to enable the research informants to speak about the specific phenomenon from their perspective and expressed with their own words (David and Sutton, 2004). In addition, *open-ended* questions allow the researcher to gather information that has not been previously thought of. The qualities mentioned differentiate *open-ended* questions from *closed-ended* questions, which are known to compel the participant to respond in a way which might not have been considered by the individual (David and Sutton, 2004). Despite this argument, both types of questions are appropriate in qualitative research. As David and Sutton (2004) outline, their suitability is determined by the research area, research participants' motives, as well as the place and the method for data gathering. In this research, preference was given to the *open ended* questions, although the closed-end questions were also included due to the normal flow of conversation or for filling the gaps in the categories developed.

The length of interviews varied from eighteen minutes to over two hours. Goulding (2002) states that short interviews should not be viewed as being less contributing towards theory development. According to her, often less lengthy interviews with clear answers can often provide more revealing information leading towards the development of codes. Yet, all 14 semi-structured interviews with 12 research participants lasted on average for one hour and sixteen minutes, allowing exploration of the socially constructed meanings of masculinity and their impact on the male spa consumer behaviour. The duration of the interviews totalled almost 14 hours (13 hours and 48 minutes). The number of interviews and research participants differs because two interviewees were interviewed a second time for the reason of theory validation.

Their views were sought to ensure that the theory developed reflected their views and spa experiences. The profiles of interviewees are provided in Appendix C.

### **3.7.2 Memos**

Memos were used as a tool to support theory development. They are ideas, which occur during data collection or while engaging in completely different activities at any time, and can be of assistance particularly at the later stage of data analysis (Goulding, 2001) to stimulate ideas in the coding process (Charmaz, 2006, Goulding, 2001; Goulding and Saren, 2010), compare data and direct further data-gathering or lead towards the development of conceptual categories (Charmaz, 2006). More specifically, memo-writing has assisted in elaborating categories, generating their relationship with subcategories and other categories and has been used to identify and fill gaps (Charmaz, 2006; Goulding, 2001).

Although memos are written reflections of what has been found in the data, and explain how categories relate and complement each other, they also reflect on interaction between the researcher and the data (Corbin, 2009; Orona, 1997). According to Corbin (2009), a memo is “a combination of researcher and the data interacting together to come up with an explanation of what is going on” (p. 50). The process of memo writing has been clearly described in the work of Orona (1997). According to her, memos can be written at any time and in different lengths (several pages or a paragraph) and it is not a linear process, but a rather natural interaction with the data (see Appendix D).

As Strauss and Corbin (1998) note, there is a wide variety of memos as they can be initial and written at the beginning of data coding, can enhance theoretical sampling at the later stage, or give an insight into a new phenomenon. In addition, memos can be written to work out the dimensions and properties of the category, establish the differences between two and more categories, or just give an overview of the researcher’s initial thoughts and how they have changed as the study progressed. Their purpose varies as initially memos help the researcher to conceptualise data, whereas at the later stage they guide towards places and situations for further sampling. Memos are not an actual data but the tools that can assist in further data collection and increase thinking about the concepts that emerge from data (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

The researcher appreciated the value of memo writing given that this activity generated ideas in coding and further questioning, and contributed towards achieving the final goal of the project. They were written freely without thinking about grammatical mistakes or conceptual depth of ideas, as the opposite concern can have an impact on the natural flow of the creative process (Orona, 1997). They were particularly required when generating the tentative theory and looking for the main category to represent the main phenomenon under investigation. According to Orona (1997), the purpose of writing memos is to assist the researcher in various ways by helping to unblock, crystallise concepts, integrate them or just simply express first impressions about the data. Indeed, memos were useful in all the aforementioned ways throughout data collection, its coding and analysis. The section that follows provides an overview of the location of data collection and how the recruitment of research participants took place.

### **3.8 Location of data collection and participant recruitment**

The interviews with male spa participants took place in the North East of England in the city of Newcastle upon Tyne. They were carried out on the premises of the hotel after gaining the permission to contact its male spa visitors. The male spa visitors were interviewed before or after their gym/spa sessions.

In qualitative studies the recruitment of participants differs in comparison to quantitative research. Qualitative research enhances our understanding about the phenomenon under investigation and the context in which the phenomenon occurs (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011). Hence, only a small number of people with specific characteristics and who would have the greatest knowledge were required so that the studied phenomenon could be explored in-depth and provide the required detailed information (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011).

The selection of research participants in this project was purposive in terms of their gender and the necessity to be a spa visitor. However, in most cases convenience sampling was employed because only those male spa users who gave their agreement were interviewed. This applies to the participants who were interviewed at the spa and who were reached through the snowball sampling method (see section 4.8.1 below). The researcher did not have much choice as to where to look for data and who to include but accepted what she found (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Nevertheless,

despite this disadvantage, some benefits were gained as differences in data emerged naturally due to variations in the informants or situations (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

In grounded research, sampling is also determined by the theory, therefore, it is selective, purposeful and theoretical (Goulding, 2001). In this research, specific candidates or participants with specific experiences were found accidentally in a spa or through the technique of snowball sampling (see section 4.8.1 below). The characteristics of the required participants were determined by a constant interplay between data collection, coding and analysis. For example, the researcher aimed to find out whether sociocultural norms in other countries would have an impact on consumer behaviour as it has in the North East of England. A question of culture in a different country was explored with a participant of foreign origin. In another case, theoretical sampling directed to interview spa consumers of a homosexual orientation. They were found in the spa and through the snowball sampling.

### **3.8.1 Snowball sampling**

In order to meet the research aim and objectives male spa consumers were recruited also through the *snowball* method or '*chain sampling*'. The overall principle of *snowball sampling* is to ask the key informant or the existing research participant to refer to the other person who would meet the criteria of research partaker and who would be willing to participate in the study (David and Sutton, 2004).

The *snowball recruitment* is particularly suitable in the study where the research population is difficult to access or where sampling framework is not required (David and Sutton, 2004). Nonetheless, Hennink, Hutter and Bailey's (2011) argue that this inductive type of sampling can also be employed in a study, which requires participants with specific characteristics and who would be difficult to find using other recruitment strategies.

Considering grounded theory requirements to allow data to emerge from a wider population and then, as the research evolves, concentrate on the participant sample with specific characteristics, this recruitment technique was suitable, and thus, employed in this study. Furthermore, due to a relatively small number of male spa visitors, the *snowballing* technique was seen as being appropriate.

## 3.9 Coding process

The data gathered was analysed by following the coding procedure developed by Strauss and Corbin (1998). Its overview is presented graphically in Appendix E. A coding process in this version of grounded theory comprises three parts: *open coding*, *axial coding* and *selective coding*. Each of them together with the line-by-line analysis will be discussed separately in the following subsections of this section.

### 3.9.1 Line-by-line analysis

In this thesis the data gathered initially was coded *line-by-line* as the literature on grounded theory suggests (Goulding, 2001; Goulding and Saren, 2010; Pope, Ziebland and Mays, 2006; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). It is a strategy, which establishes a closer relationship with the data before the conceptualization of ideas begins (Charmaz, 2006). This type of coding is used to find the key words or phrases that could bring more light onto the studied phenomenon (Goulding, 2001).

Strauss and Corbin (1998) call this coding process a microanalysis that enables the researcher to analyse the specifics of data rather than describe them. Thus, in this way, attention is given to what informants are saying and how they are saying it. This is achieved by asking *theoretical* questions, which “stimulate discovery of properties, dimensions, conditions, and consequences such as who, when, what, how, and why” and are particularly important during the earliest research process (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

Despite its methodological benefits, the implementation of *line-by-line* analysis was not implemented in every interview but only in the very first one due to time limitations. As Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggest, a *line-by-line* procedure at the later stage of research becomes less required and can be applied only in the important extracts of data. This advice was taken into consideration to make data coding and research analysis more efficient.

### 3.9.2 Open coding

*Open coding* is “the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data” (Punch, 2006). It allows for the primary thoughts, ideas and

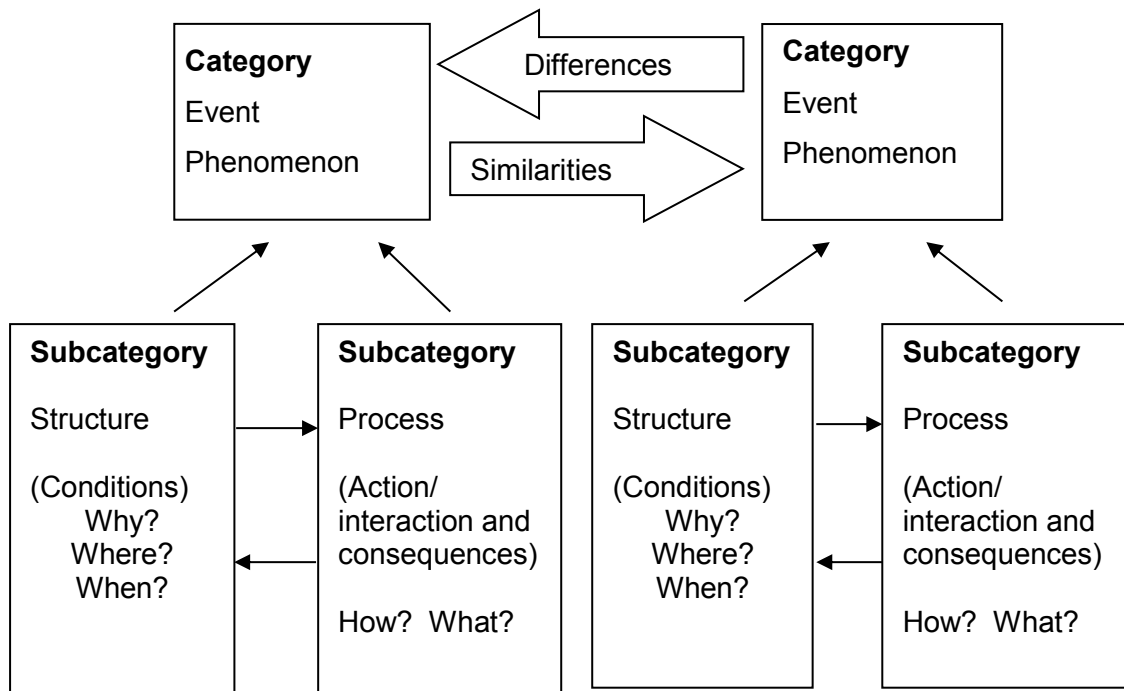


meanings to emerge (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). This process commences with the full transcription of an interview (Goulding, 2001) using a *line-by-line* approach to coding (Goulding and Saren, 2010; Pope, Ziebland and Mays, 2006). The participants' words for labelling themes and categories were used at the initial stage of the data analysis and this terminology took the researcher to the formation of analytical categories (Pope, Ziebland and Mays, 2006).

The most significant and frequently occurring codes were then compared with each other and were grouped into *categories* (Thornberg *et al.* 2011). Strauss and Corbin (1998) define *categories* as concepts that emerge from data and contain an ability to explain the problem or event. Grouping objects, situations and events is based on shared common characteristics; therefore, this process is also known as *comparative analysis* (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). The purpose of this process is twofold. Firstly, it reduces the number of concepts and secondly, it enables them to explain the life experiences of the participants (Mills, Bonner and Francis, 2006; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). This type of abstraction then moves the researcher into a higher level of coding, called *axial coding*.

### **3.9.3 Axial coding**

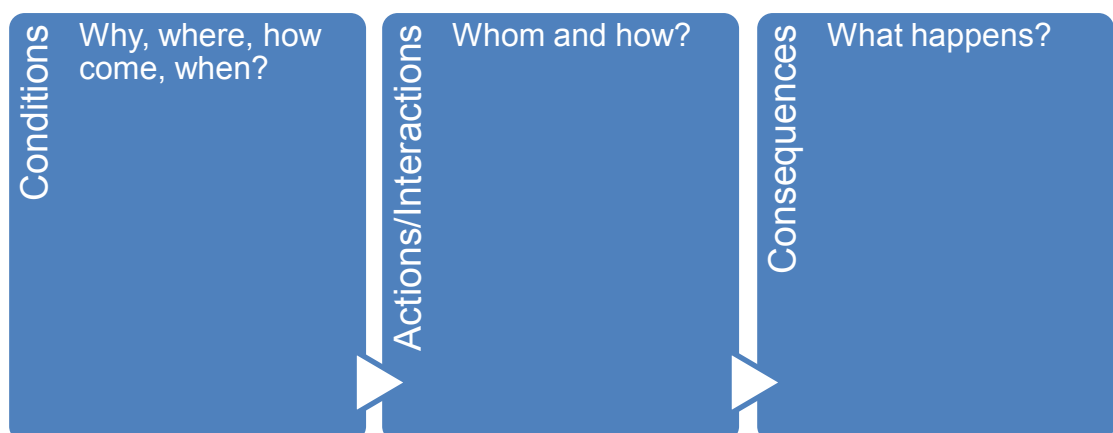
*Axial coding* serves to establish relationships between categories and between categories and their subcategories. The graphical process of *axial coding* is presented in Figure 4.2 below.



**Figure 3.2:** Graphic depiction of axial coding

As Strauss and Corbin (1998) note, an inter-relationship between categories and subcategories helps to better explain the studied phenomenon and from this point takes it to the level of theorising. *Axial coding* is a higher level of abstraction since it requires examination of the relationship between the categories, and this process moves the analysis from description to theory development (Goulding, 2001).

In *axial coding*, answers about the studied phenomenon and relationships between the categories are gained by asking questions such as *why*, *how*, *where*, *when* and *what* consequences follow a certain behaviour and actions (see Figure 4.2 above and Figure 4.3 below).



**Figure 3.3:** Process of axial coding

These type of questions help contextualise the phenomenon, which means that it is explained structurally and procedurally (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

*Axial coding* is a paradigm (Strauss and Corbin, 1998), which assists in identifying relationships between conditions, actions/interactions and consequences. It was developed to assist researchers in finding the links between categories, as these connections are not always easy to detect (Corbin and Strauss, 1998). Thus, it can be regarded as an organisational scheme or an analytic stance that helps researchers to organise and explain data through structure and process.

The developed paradigm by Strauss and Corbin (1998) contains the main components such as *conditions*, *actions/interactions*, and *consequences* (see Figure 4.3 above). *Conditions* create situations or a problem and “might arise out of time, place, culture, rules, regulations, beliefs, economics, power, or gender factors as well as the social worlds, organizations, and institutions in which we find ourselves along with our personal motivations and biographies” (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 130). They should be extracted from the data, given that research informants are not always able to provide motives for their behaviour (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

*Actions/ interactions* (see Figures 4.2 and 4.3 above) are defined as the responses of informants to their experienced issues, problems and events under certain circumstances, while *consequences* are identified as the outcomes of *action/interaction*. Classifying categories into conditions, actions/interactions and consequences, according to Strauss and Corbin (1998), is not required per se, but is necessary for seeking an explanation and gaining a deeper understanding about the studied phenomenon.

### **3.9.4 Selective coding**

The third stage of coding is *selective* (see Appendix E). During this process of data analysis a core category is selected and examined in relation to other categories. At the same time, it establishes which categories require further development or refinement (Punch, 2006). A core category reflects the main research theme and it provides the basis for theory to emerge (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). The purpose of constructing a core category is to explain the behaviour under study. In simple terms, it provides an overall understanding of what the whole research is concerned with (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), different

researchers might come up with different conceptualisations of the main research problem and it is highly dependent on the researcher's theoretical background and perspective. However, one thing that has to be adhered to is to select the category, which could unite the perspectives of the majority of research participants and present them through a combination of conceptual terms (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

All three stages of data coding will be presented in more detail in Chapters 5 and 6; while the following section of the current chapter will provide the scientific evaluation of this research.

### **3.10 Measuring quality of findings**

The findings, their interpretations and the conclusions reached in each research are assessed scientifically. The terms validity, generalizability and reliability, which are relevant and required in quantitative studies, are found to be inappropriate when measuring the quality of grounded (Weed, 2009) and qualitative research in general (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Thus, credibility, fittingness and auditability have been suggested instead to evaluate the scientific qualitative results (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The following subsections will evaluate the rigour of this research through the aforementioned criteria.

#### **3.10.1. Credibility**

The derived theory can be evaluated in qualitative research through credibility. This criterion is applied in order to evaluate the accuracy and depth of the description of the investigated phenomenon (Beck, 1993). One way to achieve theory credibility is to give the research participants the power to lead the research process and take into account the meanings of research participants when developing theory (Chiovitti and Piran, 2003). This was undertaken by employing a flexible approach in data collection through semi-structured interviews (see section 4.7.2).

The level of credible interpretation was also raised by inviting the interviewed informants to ensure the accuracy of the constructed research output (transcripts and provisional theory) (Chiovitti and Piran, 2003; Egan, 2002; Goulding, 2001; Goulding, 2002; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Morris, 2006). The credibility of the emerged theory was achieved through recorded conversations with two previous participants and three new research informants (see interview No. 11 transcript in Appendix F).

Credibility was also enhanced by expressing the gathered views about the studied phenomenon in memos. They are viewed as self-monitoring tools that can limit the researcher's influence on the data collection process (Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Chiovitti and Piran, 2003). Insights and analytical ideas, expressed in memos, limited the chances of developing theory based on personal assumptions rather than what was theoretically relevant to the research informants (Chiovitti and Piran, 2003).

### **3.10.2. Fittingness**

Fittingness or transferability (Gasson, 2003; Lincoln and Guba, 1985) is used to measure how well the proposed theory of the studied phenomenon fits in other contexts and how widely the generated theory can be applied. These two terms replace the deductive positivist research requirement for generalizability, which, as Gasson (2003) asserts, can never be achieved due to the nature of qualitative studies. Since qualitative research, including the interpretive grounded theory, focuses on specific samples rather than a large population, it cannot generate a generalisable theory because it does not perceive the external reality as existing independently from the knower (Gasson, 2003). The process of theory development is interpretive and subjective, and derives from the socially-constructed meanings. Thus, for it to be transferable there should be a match between the conditions of the contexts and the factors that influence the theoretical model (Gasson, 2003).

In order to fit the developed theory in other contexts it is important to outline demographic characteristics of informants before commencing data collection (Chiovitti and Piran, 2003). Yet, in this research project, the age and the typology of male informants at the initial stage of recruitment were not deliberately considered to avoid data contamination with existing knowledge. Consumer and gender research argues that men who are interested in intensive grooming are metrosexuals or belong to the younger generation of consumers (see Chapter 2). However, it was felt that the term metrosexuality might hold different meanings for research participants or it could be applied to male spa consumers of an older age if empirical findings prove that. For this reason, it was deliberately decided to restrain from looking for a specific sample at the beginning of the research allowing for a more concrete and definite picture of required consumers to emerge from the data. Thus, the fittingness of the developed theory to other consumption contexts have not been achieved and this has never been the aim of this study. As was discussed in section 4.6.3, theories can be substantive and

formal, and this research has focused on generating a theory applicable to the context researched.

### **3.10.3 Auditability**

Research auditability reflects the consistency of the research study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). This was achieved through explicit description of the data collection and analysis techniques, employed here (Beck, 1993; Chiovitti and Piran, 2003; Gasson, 2003). Drawing upon scholarly suggestions, the auditability in this research was met by specifying how research informants were selected for the study and how theoretical constructions were reached (Chiovitti and Piran, 2003; Gasson, 2003). Firstly, participants were recruited through convenience sampling, which later became replaced by theoretical sampling until data saturation. This was explained in section 3.8. Secondly, the following two chapters (Chapters 5 and 6) will delineate the coding process. The relationship of the categories will begin in Chapter 5 and will be finally assessed in Chapter 6 through the paradigm model that helped to identify the status of the concepts in the theory proposed.

Gasson (2003) argues that auditability is very much determined by the worldview of the researcher. If reality is perceived as subjective, socially-constructed and interpreted as opposed to existing independently, then auditability can be achieved by recording each of the decisions made. This has been reflected in the current chapter and Chapters 5 and 6 that will follow.

## **3.11 Reflexivity**

### **3.11.1 Biographical reflexivity**

Until recently grounded research mainly focused on the analytical process rather than contributions to reflexivity (Neil, 2006). Nevertheless, reflexivity is essential in grounded studies, because the latter type of qualitative research is closely linked to symbolic interactionism (Neil, 2006). Since symbolic interactionism and constructionism claim human actions are the after effects of social interaction, it is important to include a reflective statement on the researcher–participant relationship, developed in this study.

Undoubtedly, interaction between the researcher and the research participants have an impact upon the data collection, analysis and findings (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey,

2011; Mallory, 2001). Interpretivism accepts the notion that the background and values of the researcher can influence the process of data creation (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011). A view exists, that demographical dimensions between the researcher and the study participants should be matching. For example, Mahon *et al.* (1996) assert that similarities in social characteristics, such as an age, gender and ethnicity are preferable, in order to create a better rapport between the inquirer and the respondent.

However, there is a completely different view. Mallory (2001) argues that differences in personal and professional values between the inquirer and the research informant can increase trust and openness among them as well as research credibility. In fact, discrepancies enrich our lives and bring a better understanding of the reality researched, and for this reason, differences in ethnicity, socioeconomic class, sexual orientation and culture must be included in the research rapport (Mallory, 2001). "Failure to recognize and integrate differences between researcher and respondent into grounded theory may limit a researcher's ability to accurately interpret data" (Mallory, 2001, p. 89).

Neil (2006) acknowledges that a total match of all characteristics between the two sides is hardly achievable. This is the case in this research because the researcher has come from a completely different social and cultural background. My Lithuanian origin, undergraduate and postgraduate education, as well as experience in teaching and journalism in the country of origin, and most importantly my gender distinguished me from the male interviewees, who all were Britons with a wide range of ages. Although there were more differences than similarities between my research participants and me this did not have a negative effect on the process of data collection. In fact, these differences made us all more receptive and understanding. As a speaker of a foreign language, I was in particular attentive in order to understand the given perspective of my participants and paid a great deal of attention to what they were saying. Clarity was sought by repeating their views or by asking them to explain an unfamiliar word. Finally, it is most likely that sharing the same interest in spas contributed to a more receptive approach towards each other during the interview process. The research participants were understanding and cooperative. They willingly provided answers to the questions asked and agreed to be contacted for additional interviews for theory validation purposes.

The methodology literature also advises the researcher to be familiar with the culture of the studied individuals through the opportunity either to live or work in it (Goulding, 2002). "They should be attentive to their beliefs, customs, habits and cultural context. Without sufficient cultural experience an interpretation may not be culturally relevant and may create description rather than interpretation" (Goulding, 2002, p. 52). The study meets this specific requirement for undertaking this type of qualitative research since I, the researcher, have been living in the North East of England for nine years. I worked in the social care industry for four years before enrolling on a full time Master course in Tourism and Hospitality Management at Newcastle Business School of Northumbria University. My studies extended into a Postgraduate Research course by undertaking this project to explore the behaviour of male spa consumers and the current sociocultural trends in the North East of England with the intention of contributing both to consumer and gender research, as well as to marketing and the sustainable spa business practice. During these studies, I occasionally returned to disabled communities to give help the disadvantaged people and worked as a professional research assistant in my school. This depth of experience of working and studying in the UK organisations in the North East resulted in cultural adaptation and a closer familiarity with culture differences that separate the UK and Lithuania.

### **3.11.3 Reflections on research process**

However, it has to be admitted that the journey for obtaining access to the male spa participants was far from easy. Access to spas was sought in three ways: via post, email or personal visits. In all, 24 letters were sent out via post or email to spa companies in the North East region from May 2011 until October 2012. Nevertheless, this strategy did not attain positive results; therefore, I decided to pay a visit to the same and new spa businesses in the region. In total 19 various spa locations were visited across the North East. Two initial agreements were secured with spa and leisure managers in Morpeth and Newcastle upon Tyne in 2011. However, the actual data gathering process was postponed for approximately half a year given the need to get familiar with the extant knowledge in the area of the research topic. Unfortunately, the literature review came at a cost. Due to the leave of managers, the search for a location to gather data started again in May 2012. Two spa businesses agreed to collaborate, however, one of them under one condition that the male spa clients would be firstly approached by the management team to find out whether they would be happy to participate in the study. Unfortunately, this decision resulted in no response and interest from the male spa users. Consequently, only one organisational consent



form was signed, granting access to male spa customers in Newcastle upon Tyne. This gave me a starting point to begin data collection using grounded theory approach.

Before engaging in the actual data collection process I carried out a pilot interview. The rationale for undertaking piloting was to test the selected type of semi-structured interview and gain experience in seeking information from male participants about their spa consumption practices. I saw this as a practical opportunity to prepare for the pitfalls I might come across and how they could be counteracted in the future. However, most importantly I undertook piloting with the intention to check how potential participants would react to the topic and questions of the study about current masculine values and men's interest in wellbeing and beautification. The first interviewee greeted the research topic well and answered all questions without any negative feelings. Therefore, all questions that were asked remained in the interview design (see Appendix B). The risk for potential respondents to withdraw from the study due to the nature of questions was perceived as low.

Finally, piloting was also important for testing people's reactions to the questions from the Interviewee's profile questionnaire. The question on the individual's sexual orientation was perceived as a sensitive matter. I felt that by bringing this question to the fore, the relationship between me, as the researcher, and the informant would potentially be damaged and its detrimental impact would particularly be felt at the later stage of the research when verification from informants would be required. Therefore, prior to piloting, I decided to leave this question as the very last one to avoid a negative effect on the overall completion of the questionnaire.

Even so, during the piloting interview with a heterosexual informant the question on sexual orientation did not cause any negative emotions. Yet, I still felt that this question could possibly be perceived as sensitive and intrusive by those participants of different sexual orientation, therefore, I sought from a colleague, who conducted interviews with lesbian, gay and transgender representatives in her study. Our informal discussion gave me reassurance that gay/lesbian/transgender communities perceive the question on sexual identity as normal and would not cause a reduced response rate. In addition, following the report by Haseldon and Joloza (2009) of a project on sexual Identity by the Office for National Statistics, I made a final decision to place the question of sexual orientation alongside nationality, age and marital status, as suggested by the project executors (see Appendix G). In reality, all 12 participants completed this question without hesitation and did not cause any concern or stress.

### **3.11.3 Ethical considerations**

This research was carried out by adhering to the ethical standards, outlined in the researcher handbook of the University of Northumbria. All ethical requirements were met firstly, by gaining formal access to data collection. A consent form was signed with the manager of the wellness club, run on the premises of a specific hotel in Newcastle (see Appendix H). Before proceeding with the interviews, all research participants approached were informed about the purpose of the study, the data collection method, the length of interviews, the confidentiality of information given and the anonymity of participants. They signed individual consent forms as an agreement with the above (see Appendix I).

The interviews were recorded using a digital recorder. The information transcribed was kept securely on a computer with access to the files available only to the researcher. All printed versions of the interviews as well as recordings were kept securely locked in the cabinet on the premises of the Faculty of Business and Law. The participants were assigned different names to ensure anonymity and confidentiality in this study. The names of family members and friends mentioned do not feature in the analysis to ensure the participants' anonymity.

### **3.11.4 North East Context**

Before providing the results that derived from the analysis of semi-structured interviews, I felt that a reader would benefit from a brief introduction into the historical and cultural context of the North East region. It is worthwhile including this section, which could serve as a stepping point in the following chapters to help better understand why a certain type of masculinity prevails in this part of the country. It has been argued in Chapter 2 that social and cultural environment has a strong impact on how consumers behave. Yet, a historic conditioning is equally important. It affects the formation of values and behaviour models in a specific geographical location.

Men from the North East are not an exception. Their social practices have been shaped by historic specifications of this region. The North East in the past was known as an industrial place where men conformed to prescriptive gender roles. Here, men developed an understanding that the role of a man was to be a provider, while a task of a woman was to take care of the household. This is how gender rules and roles operated in this part of England and the whole country in the earlier centuries.

In Medieval times, Newcastle operated as a trade centre where leather, wool and ropes were produced and where coal mining and shipbuilding industries were established (Lambert, no date). Natural resources, such as iron and coal, the availability of a harbour and its strategic position gave rise to the manufacturing industry, which established its premises on both sides of the river Tyne up to the North Sea (Dendy, 1921). Local men supplied coal to London and other ports of England and the Continent through the river Tyne (Dendy, 1921; Dougan and Graham, 1962; Newcastle Local Studies & Family History Centre, 2009). They also were the main workforce in steam transport, and with the broadening of railway infrastructure contributed to the growing scale of the mining industry (Dendy, 1921). The local men also had an opportunity to develop their manufacturing skills further when the historical figure, Lord Armstrong, started his engineering business.

The described historical settings naturally formed men from the North East as breadwinners. To work in mining and other heavy industries required physical and emotional strength. Thus, the breadwinning model of masculinity prevailed and was unquestionable. It could be argued that men's choice to be different was limited and probably even impossible due to historic and economic circumstances. Economic and historic environment formed a working class society. According to Dougan and Graham (1962), in the mid nineteenth century elementary education was not accessible to everyone. In the North East, the number of schoolchildren was lower in comparison to the national average (Dougan and Graham, 1962). Therefore, all the above mentioned conditions predetermined social relations and roles which contributed towards gender binary. Men formed their masculinities in the manufacturing industry where strength and toughness was required. This type of masculinity construction was passed from one generation to another and was perceived as the legitimate way of doing male gender in the Northern part of England.

It has been popular to call the North East of England "Geordie land". Among many meanings, the term Geordie refers to miners. Since this profession no longer exist in the UK, it became associated with people who live on the Tyneside or the wider region (Colls and Lancaster, 2005). If in the past "Geordie" referred to men, today it is used as a definition of a regional identity (Colls and Lancaster, 2005), which in the late nineteenth century was significantly influenced by urbanisation (Colls, 2005). "The landscape which first signified the region as a labour region – cranes, hulls, factory chimneys, pit winding gear – has all but vanished" (Colls, 2005, p. 24). According to

Byrne (2005), the North East became postmodernised, which means that capitalism became fragmented and deindustrialised, while society differentiated.

Nevertheless, the regional identity not only survived but continues to thrive due to the combination of a few factors – respect and pride of one's roots, promotion of the regional identity in the national life and ability to embrace modernity while maintaining its past (Lancaster, 2005). Geordies became known for their conspicuous consumption, yet, have not abandoned traditional values formed by historical specifications in the mentioned region. Therefore, the stories and perspectives of many interviewed men, that will be revealed in Chapter 5, reflect not only the democratisation in the meanings of masculinity but also convey a deeply entrenched view that breadwinning model of masculinity is a culturally and socially safe behaviour of manhood.

### **3.11.5 Research participants' demographics and their impact upon research findings**

Nevertheless, a described historical conditioning is not the only source of influence that impacted upon men's perceptions of masculinity and how this understanding determined their preferred way of consuming spas in the UK. Despite their shared commonality, such as being British, except one Italian, and being males, the interviewed men also differed among themselves. These differences were noticed in their age, sexual orientation, occupation and place of living. Yet, it is only type of demographics, such as sexual orientation, that contributed the most to the plurality of answers received.

As shown in Appendix C, the interviewed male spa users have come from different backgrounds. Although majority of them are living in the North East, four participants were originally from other parts of England or came to live to the North East from overseas. Two participants, Scott and William, declared being from the South, with one living in London and another living in the North East since the age eighteen. Brian's roots are from the North West, while Andrea is an Italian, currently working and living in the region of the North East. Despite the variety of locations declared, men gave preference to the traditional masculine values – such as being a breadwinner, being successful at work and being physically fit. Men of different age, stage of life or occupation (i.e. John – retired; Scott and Ben – the youngest, Michael and Brian – managing directors; Robert – factory worker) equally gave preference to the traditional

masculine values. It shows that this notion of masculinity that in many ways reminds us the hegemonic model of masculinity takes a prominent position in the contemporary men's lives despite the evidence of modernisation.

Yet, men acknowledged not being indifferent to how they look. Physical appearance was relevant to all men I have spoken to, however their chosen methods to ensure physical attractiveness were different. In order to be lean and fit seven men out of the twelve go to the gym and build a masculine physique. Exercising at the gym is their preferred way of enhancing their physical looks. Some men like Scott, Robert, Michael, Steven, Thomas and Brian exercise at a gym on a daily or weekly basis, whilst Samuel and Ben did that in the past. Men's desire to build a preferred masculine physique is not affected by their residing place. This equally concerns men who were from the North East (i.e. Robert, Michael, Steven, Samuel and Ben), the South of England – London (i.e. Scott), the North West (i.e. Brian) or like Thomas, who is originally from the North East but currently lives and works in the South of England – London. Similarly, age does not affect the men's preference on how to look after their bodies since those who were in their twenties (i.e. Scott, Thomas and Ben), thirties (i.e. Robert), forties (i.e. Michael and Steven) or fifties (i.e. Brian and Samuel) equally wanted to ensure their longevity and physical attractiveness through body work. Since men take care of their body image, first, through exercising, they use spas just as a complimentary service. It is only Samuel, Ben, Steven and Thomas, who also appreciate the relaxing and rejuvenating spa properties, therefore use/used them sometimes as a primary product either monosocially (alone, i.e. Samuel and Ben), heterosocially (with women, i.e. Samuel, Steven and Ben) or homosocially (with other men, i.e. Thomas).

New trends in male body care have also been embraced by the interviewed men. Men acknowledged the media's impact in liberating their masculine values. Male interviewees admitted not only using spa facilities in private spas or chain hotels for primary reasons to increase health and wellbeing but also engaging in body aestheticisation activities at spas or at home. Their body grooming comprises facials or manicures, pedicures and waxing at spas or the use of cosmetics (masks, moisturisers, eye creams) at home or eyebrow tweezing in beauty salons. The views expressed regarding the use of beauty products varied. An apparent divide was noticed between heterosexuals and homosexuals with the latter men being more open and keen to body beautification with cosmetics. Heterosexuals from all age groups admitted using a moisturiser (i.e. Ben, Robert, Andrea, Steven Brian and Samuel), a concealer (i.e.

Andrea and Ben), a body wrap (Ben), eyeliner in his student years (Samuel) or body wax for a dare (Michael), however, it is the homosexuals (i.e. Thomas, William and Andrew), who consumed a wider variety of grooming products and services in different locations (i.e. at home, spas or other beauty spaces) to enhance their physical appearance. Nevertheless, their attitude towards spas slightly differed with Thomas and William being regular and confident users of wellness places, while Andrew admitted being less confident and less experienced in spa consumption.

The interviewed men's perceptions of masculinity and men's preferred ways of looking after their bodies determined men's consumption of spa services in the North East of England or across the UK. Therefore, it was not so much their demographics, except sexual orientation, but men's expressed values and practices that became the fundament allowing to differentiate spas into a primary product or a secondary product and male spa consumption into a few groups of consumption based on men's sexual orientation and companions used – heterosocial consumption (with women), homosexual consumption (with other men) or monosocial consumption (if consumed alone). The gathered male interviewees' attitude towards body aestheticisation and their actual grooming practices are bringing new notions into the realms of masculinity. Thus, it is these factors that then contributed to suggesting a new term of masculinity that is "conflicted masculinities", which emerges due to the influence of the traditional sociocultural norms and the media's modernising impact on male grooming.

### **3.12 Chapter summary**

This chapter provided an overview of the research design, adopted in the current study. It outlined the specifications of qualitative research, clarified philosophical and epistemological stances before introducing the selected methodology for conducting this project. It gave an in depth description of the criteria for developing a good and valid theory. This chapter also explained the specific data collection methods employed, in order to meet the research aims and objectives. In addition, it acknowledged the credibility, fittingness and auditability of the developed theory and research through the strategies utilised. It provided a reflective statement, outlining how the researcher's and participants interactions influenced the research process, and specified all ethical considerations, which were adhered to whilst performing this project. Finally, the chapter ended with an overview of the historical context of the North East region, as an aid to a more clear understanding of the findings of this study.

In addition, the last subsection was written to explain whether and how the interviewed men's demographics contributed to the research results.

## Chapter 4: Open and axial categories

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### 4.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 aims to introduce open and axial categories that were developed out of nine semi-structured interviews. The first part provides a brief summary of the codes that emerged at the stage of open coding, while the second part presents the categories grouped at the axial coding stage. The discussion will start with describing the process of how codes were developed, following an overview of the generated axial categories and then will move onto addressing each of them separately.

### 4.2 Development process of open codes

The aim of *open coding* in grounded theory research is to identify concepts through an analytical process by looking for significant events. Following the tenets of Strauss and Corbin's (1998) version of grounded theory, the data gathered at interview No.1 was coded *line-by-line* using NVivo software. The initial 256 codes (see Figure 4.1) through a constant comparative method were then grouped into 34 categories, representing incidents, events and acts (see Table 4.1).



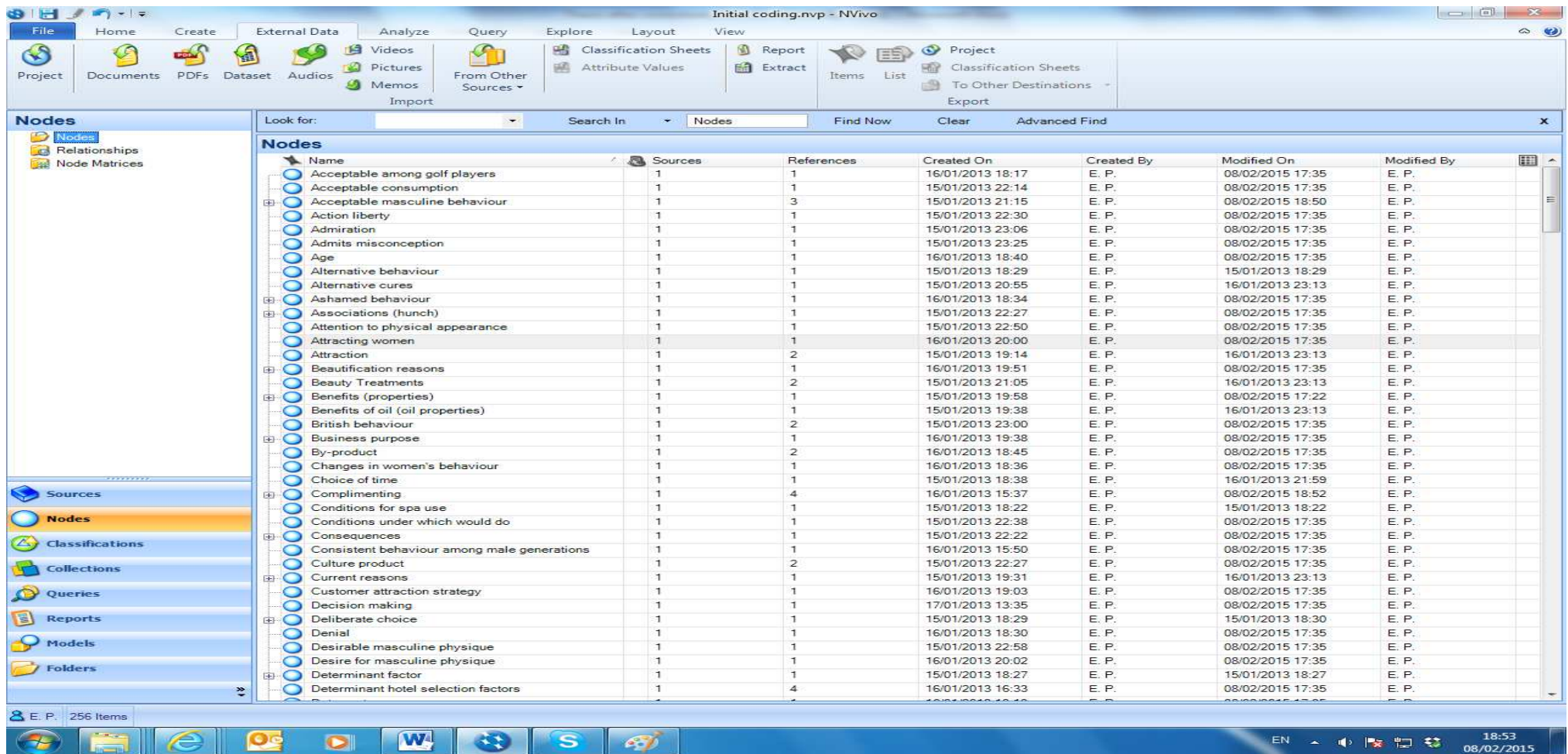


Figure 4.1: Codes developed during line-by-line analysis

**Table 4.1:** List of categories from interview No. 1

Interview No.	Number of categories	Categories
1	34	Acceptable behaviour; Accessibility; Association; Attitude; Benefits; Men's behaviour; Reasons; Changes; Complimenting; Consistency among male generations; Decision making; Experience; Handsome behaviour; Importance; Indifference; Indulgence; Masculine physique; Masculinity; Men's qualities; Mockery; No changes; Places; Prettification; Prudishness; Rejection; Required services; Restrictions; Spa activities, Spa companions; Spa users; Spas; Typical activities; Unacceptable behaviour; Younger men's behaviour

The data gathered in the subsequent eight interviews continued to be analysed by using a comparative analysis technique within the MindGenius programme. The categories developed were refined by constantly comparing them against the new data from each interview. This resulted in the reduced number of categories ranging from 34 in interview No. 1 (see Table 4.1 above) to nine categories in interview No. 9 (see Appendix J). A further comparative analysis of all nine semi-structured interviews resulted in the abstraction of five categories (see Table 4.2 below).

**Table 4.2:** Categories from nine semi-structured interviews

Number of categories	Categories
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Men's behaviour</li> <li>• Culture</li> <li>• Social pressure</li> <li>• Spa perception</li> <li>• Changes</li> </ul>

The summary of five main categories, their properties and dimensions are provided in Appendix K. Some categories already contain subcategories, conditions, actions/interactions and consequences, because this information emerged naturally at the open coding stage. Since open categories are not necessarily systematically interrelated, this chapter focuses predominantly on the axial categories and the relationship between them. They will provide the basis for the theory to emerge, which will be integrated into a theoretical model during the process of selective coding (see

Chapter 5). The axial categories, provided in this chapter, are discussed in relation to each other. They represent the phenomenon, the conditions, actions/interactions and the consequences, explaining the structure and the process of male spa consumption.

### 4.3 Identification of axial categories

The aim of *axial coding* is to identify categories and their subcategories, and the relationship between the categories. By returning to the gathered data of all nine interviews, the researcher was able to identify concepts that were able to explain the phenomenon, the conditions, the process and the consequences, derived from the actions of the male spa visitors. This process consisted of two stages and is reflected in Appendix L. At the Stage 1 of axial coding, the open coding categories were subsumed under higher level categories. The subsumed categories were also identified as conditions, actions/interactions or consequences in order to bring more explanatory power. At the Stage 2 of axial coding, these categories were then subtracted into concepts. It resulted in the reduced number of categories and moved data analysis from description to theorising. This was achieved by examining the relationship between these categories in order to explain the spa consumption process of male visitors. The theoretical interrelationship of the proposed concepts is depicted in Appendix M.

The concepts *sociocultural norms* and the *mass media* were prominent as macro conditions (see Appendix L) and allowed for the concept of *social pressure* to emerge as the phenomenon (see Appendix M). By abstracting the previously developed open subcategories *acceptable behaviour*, *unacceptable/unpractised behaviour*, *attitude*, *spa activities* and *typical men's activities* (see Appendices K and L) into the category *limited acceptance of spa* (see Appendix L), the researcher was able to explain the consumption process of spa and grooming services, employed by men in the North East.

Furthermore, men's reluctance to include spas in their leisure was related to dissonance, experienced by the male spa clients due to the aforementioned conditions. Therefore, this information was categorised under the concept *male spa consumers in dissonance* (see Appendices L and M). Finally, the conditions and the adequate actions/interactions, followed after, gave rise to the concept of *conflicted masculinities*, representing the consequences in this study (see Appendices L and M).

All main five categories are introduced below in more general terms and explained through their subcategories, which are in italic. The full list of the latter ones can be found in Appendix M. In Chapter 5 the main categories will be discussed in more detail through their integration into a theoretical model.

## 4.4 Social pressure

The category *social pressure* represents the phenomenon, which makes an impact on the consumption patterns of the male spa visitors in the North East region. This concept in the *open coding* stage was already among the main five categories subsumed through the method of constant comparison. The subcategories of this category are provided in Appendix M.

The concept “*pressure*” has emerged during the interview No. 5 with Michael. Initially the existence of *social pressure* was denied, as the desire to look well was thought to be the outcome of *self-pressure*. In the view of Michael, *self-pressure* is what makes men pay more attention to their physical appearance. Yet, the phenomenon of *social pressure* was recognised as relevant by the subsequent participants. *Mass media* and *sociocultural norms* stood out from the rest of social institutions, mentioned in the interviews, as having the strongest impact on the actions of the male spa attendees in this part of the country. Their influence will be outlined in the subsections that follow.

## 4.5 Macro conditions

### 4.5.1. Sociocultural norms

Men’s attitude to spas and men’s spa consumption habits were explained as the outcome of *sociocultural norms*, which operate in this part of the country by making a strong impact on how men view themselves and the activities they engage in. Due to this external influence, consumption remains *gendered*. For instance, spas are strongly attributed to the interest of female customers (*women’s activities*), while participation in sport is mostly desired by male consumers (*men’s typical activities*). This pattern prevails despite the favourable minor conditions, for example, *gender convergence* in many spheres of life, as well the existence of *freedom of behaviour* in this region.

There is a tendency to comply with the prevalent gender norms in this part of the country (*regional sociocultural norms*), since consequences for practicing the opposite

behaviour can be adverse. *Social stigma* (association with gay or ridicule) received for consuming spa services is what men by all means try to avoid. In this way they are pressurised to behave according to the prescriptive male gender norms (be a breadwinner, physically active and not engage in feminine practices) (*stagnation in gender norms*).

#### **4.5.2 Mass media**

The concept of *mass media* represents another external macro condition, influencing the behaviour of male consumers in the North East. The *media* had already been identified as the condition at the open coding stage. Its impact, on the one hand, was felt as promoting male consumer interest in body beautification (*promoting body beautification*) through grooming practices. On the other hand, it was seen as equally inducing men's interest in health and wellbeing through sport and gym activities (*promoting fitness and wellbeing*), thus, forming men's perceptions about the ideal male body physique as being slim and fit.

Work environment and family have been mentioned as other sources of social influence, yet research participants assigned the strongest impact to the *media*. This social agency promotes *body aestheticization* and, as a result, creates a *celebrity syndrome* by applying pressure to improve one's physical appearance. To bring this into the context of use of the spa services and cosmetics, male consumers seek the ideal self through gym activities (for constructing an ideal body physique) and available spa services (for relaxation and beautifying effects on their wellbeing and physical appearance respectively). More specific information with regards to the male spa consumption is provided below.

### **4.6 Action/interaction**

#### **4.6.1 Male spa consumers in dissonance**

The male spa users' actions are influenced by the *social pressure*. The *regional sociocultural norms* appear to be *stagnant* and for this reason, men feel obliged to behave in a traditional way. They express preference for activities that are only prescribed as appropriate for the male gender. Alternatively, the *mass media*, by transmitting the images of the male body ideal, encourage men to pay more attention

to their physical appearance, hence, some men choose to preserve their good looks through *body aestheticization* practices at spas and/or at home.

It appears to be problematic for men to consume spa services in this part of the country. Their decision process can involve a great deal of dissonance due to a contradictory impact they receive from the two opposing conditions – the *sociocultural norms* and the *mass media*. Since spas, on the one hand, are perceived as a feminine activity and, on the other hand, provide services that can improve one's health, wellbeing and physical appearance, promoted by the media, it becomes complicated for men to consume spas for leisure in this region. Therefore, a concept of *dissonance* reflects and explains why spa services are consumed with hesitation by men in the North East.

#### **4.6.1.1 Limited acceptance of spas**

The hesitation is seen in the way men consume spas. They are predominantly used as *by-products* of other purchases, for instance, gyms or stays at a hotel (see Appendices L and M). On the other hand, they can still be perceived and used as *primary products*; nevertheless, this happens only under specific conditions. These are men's preferences to visit spas *heterosocially* (with female partners). *Homosocial consumption* (with other men) can be employed but under specific conditions – the *friendly relationship* and *commonality* (i.e. the same *sexual orientation* and *interest in spas*) between the two male spa goers, and *the type of spas* attended.

### **4.7 Consequences**

#### **4.7.1 Conflicted masculinities**

The discussion of aforementioned categories allows the conclusion that men cannot freely engage in the practices, which fall outside the boundaries of gender normativity. Their spa consumption style speaks about the strain they experience when considering spa visits. The *limited acceptance of spas* shows men feeling uncomfortable throughout all three stages of consumption – when considering visits to spas, during the consumption itself and at the post purchasing stage. Some men in particular value the restorative side of spa services; however, their intentions for enhancing one's health and wellbeing can be misunderstood and associated with femininity and homosexuality. Thus, taking into account the real life situations of the men interviewed

in this research, the male identities are seen as being in conflict between what to consume and how to consume it in the North East.

## **4.8 Summary**

This chapter has traced the process of open and axial coding with the intention of demonstrating the readership of how the categories that will be used in the selective coding stage were chosen as relevant to form the theory. They play the role of conditions, actions/interactions and consequences and can explain further the phenomenon that manifests in spas in the geographical area of the North East. The discussion of five main categories gave a view of the process and structure of male spa consumption in this region. The following chapter progresses onto the selective coding stage, during which the emergent theory was refined and verified with two previous and three additional interviewees, so bringing the total number of interviews to 14.

# **Chapter 5: Selective coding and theory of social pressure**

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## **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the final analysis of the data gathered from 14 semi-structured interviews. The results are discussed in the form of a theory that was developed in compliance with the tenets of Strauss and Corbin's (1998) version of grounded theory. A theoretical model that is presented in this chapter is the result of the data abstraction achieved during the three stages of data analysis – open coding, axial coding and selective coding. Nevertheless, it is only at the final stage of data analysis, called selective coding, that the theory developed was finally integrated and refined (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). The proposed theory of social pressure is based on the core concept around which other categories are united with the purpose of explaining the stories of many individuals (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

The current chapter focuses on the theory grounded in the answers of the male respondents. It firstly provides the summary of theory development, the main components of the theory, and then moves onto a separate and detailed discussion of each of them.

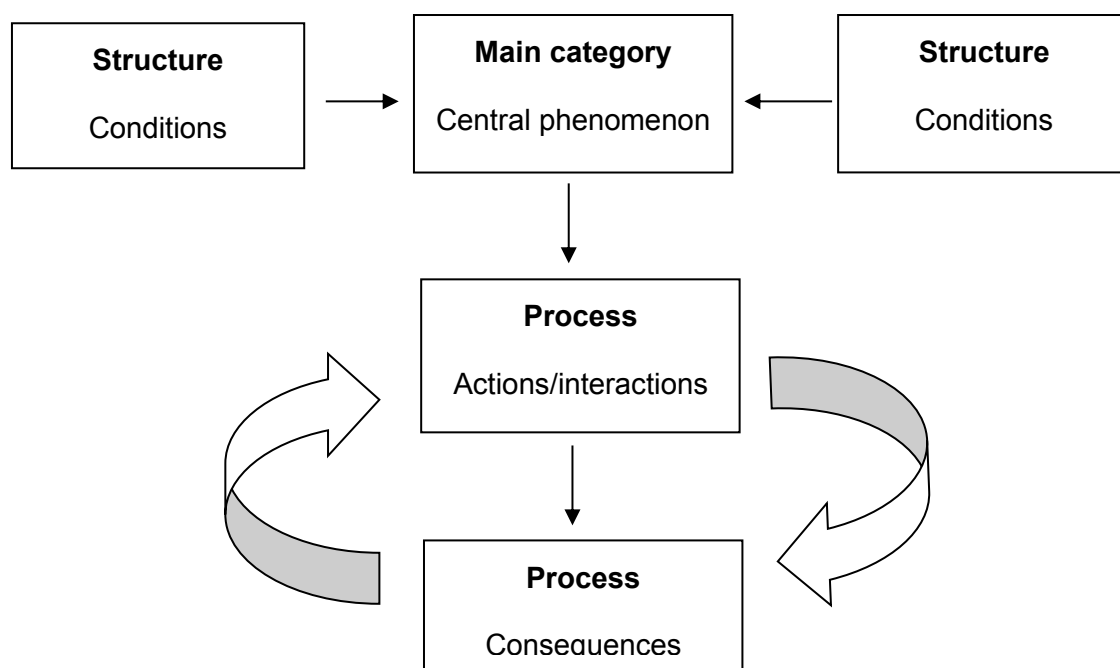
## **5.2 Summary of theory development**

The key purpose for developing a theory in this research was to provide insight into the phenomenon under study. This was achieved by interviewing male spa users in the area of Newcastle in search of the answers to the question raised. The generated theoretical scheme was validated during the selective coding stage by comparing it with raw data and by presenting the story captured to the research participants. More specifically, the credibility of the theory developed was achieved by going back to the original interviews and checking data against the evolved theory. In addition, its accuracy was also sought from the participants interviewed (as discussed in Chapter 3).

The theory of social pressure and its influence on the male spa users' consumption patterns in the North East is presented in this chapter in the following order: the central



issue, the conditions (structure) that give rise to the central phenomenon to emerge, the actions/interactions (process) that take place as a result of the prevalent influences and finally the consequences (process), which occur due to the interplay of the previously mentioned components (see Figure 5.1).



**Figure 5.1:** Interplay of theory components

The summary of the components, comprised of the theory developed is presented in a section 5.3 and will be separately discussed in the following subsections of this chapter.

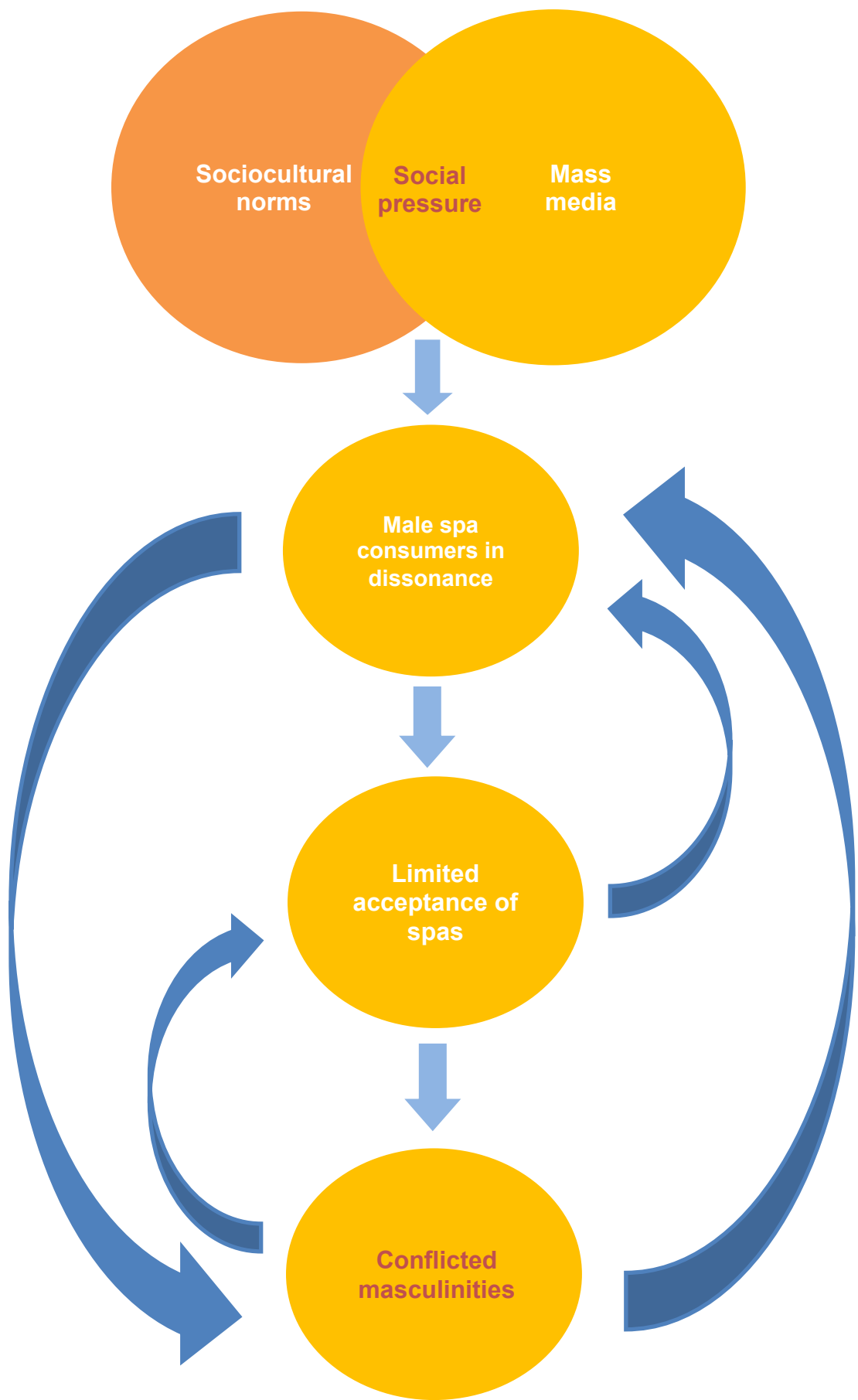
### 5.3 Summary of theory concepts

As was stated in section 5.2, the theory developed consists of four main components – the central phenomenon, the conditions, the specific actions and interactions and the consequences, which emerged from the interface of all the parts mentioned. Strauss and Corbin (1998) define this model as a paradigm model, the purpose of which is to conceptualise the phenomenon through the integration of structure and process. Concepts, that represent each component of the theory of this study, are provided in Table 5.1.

**Table 5.1:** Concepts, representing theory components

Central phenomenon	Conditions	Actions/interactions	Consequences
Social pressure	Sociocultural norms  Mass media	Male spa consumers in dissonance:  Limited acceptance of a spa: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• a by-product</li><li>• a primary product under specific conditions</li></ul>	Conflicted masculinities

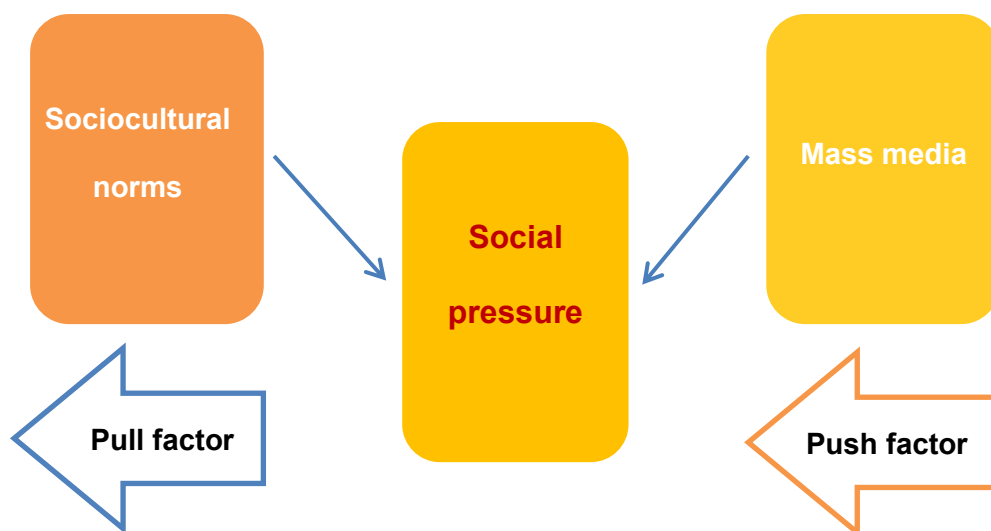
The central phenomenon, which dominates in the North East, is *social pressure*. This concept emerged during the open coding stage. It was selected to play the role of the central category at the *axial coding* stage, because it reflects the realities of the male spa consumers interviewed and the problems they face when making purchasing decisions for spa services in the North East. The relationship between the core category *social pressure* and other concepts of the theory, which represent the conditions (structure), the actions/interactions (process) and the consequences (process), is graphically depicted in Figure 5.2.



**Figure 5.2:** Graphical depiction of theory and its components

As Figure 5.2 shows, social pressure comes from two sources – the *sociocultural norms* and the *mass media*. The concepts of *sociocultural norms* and the *mass media* emerged as macro conditions during the *axial coding* stage of the data analysis and will be discussed in this chapter in relation to their impact on the male interviewees' perceptions of masculine values and their behaviour as consumers in the spas.

Insights into men's motives for spa services reveal that *sociocultural norms* and the *mass media* have a different impact on male consumers, with the first condition strongly pulling back to the normative gender behaviour in consumption, while the second social agency, in contrast, encourages new approaches in spending (see Figure 5.3). As a result, *sociocultural norms* create restrictions for anything that crosses the settled gender boundaries, while the *media* pushes towards the consumption of products and services that can enhance one's physical appearance, although such practices fall outside the traditional male gender roles.



**Figure 5.3:** Interplay between two macro conditions and direction of their influence

*Sociocultural norms* and the *mass media* are the macro forces/conditions, which have a contrasting effect on the consumption trends of male spa consumers, and, as a result, create dissonance in the consumption process of spas (see Figure 5.2 above) in this part of the country. In the centre of this conflict is the male spa consumer, who needs to find a balance by complying with the prevalent *sociocultural norms*, which still exalt traditional male gender roles, and by adopting new products or services, intensively marketed by various *media* channels.

The decision process, which becomes dissenting due to the aforementioned external conditions, gives rise to a new model of masculinity, called *conflicted masculinity*. The new form of masculinity is a socially constructed outcome, deriving from the combination of the three stages of the spa consumption process: before, during and after the purchasing of spa services. The concept *conflicted masculinities*, which in this theory plays the role of the consequences, has a power to explain the prevalent male gender attitude to spas and the consumption approach employed by men here in the North East towards the beauty and wellbeing products and services. Due to this conflict, the cycle gets repeated. It means that the consequences for constructing conflicted masculinities force male consumers again to accept spa services and overall body beautification only to a limited degree and place them into the stage of dissonance. As a result of this, men again construct masculinities that are conflicted.

Each of the concepts, which represent the core category, conditions, actions/interactions and the consequences, discussed above, will be analysed in the following sections of this chapter.

## **5.4 Central phenomenon – social pressure**

*Social pressure* is the main phenomenon underlying the current sociocultural climate in the consumption market of spa services in the North East. It refers to the pressure that the male spa clients experience when constructing their identities in the premises of the contemporary spaces of beauty and wellness, as well as before or after the use of the products and services provided by this business. *Social pressure* is the central phenomenon that encourages male consumers to conform to the social expectations, conveyed by the two social institutions that are *sociocultural norms* and the *mass media*.

Male participants are aware of the *social pressure* and have experienced it at some point in their lives. In the first nine interviews men identified the social pressure as either coming from the *sociocultural norms* or the *mass media*. On one hand, men are expected to conform to the traditional gender roles and construct their masculinities by not engaging in anything that gives connotation to femininity. On the other hand, they are also being pressurised to accept more innovative ways of looking after themselves which are conveyed by various *media* channels through role models and advertising. John, Brian, Andrea and William illustrate this tendency:

*"[Laughs] That would be regarded as feminine and not masculine and a legitimate source of – we would call it "mickey taking" or ... "abuse" would be the wrong word but I'd definitely expect to have a go at me if they thought that I was having facial treatments or anything like that"*

(John)

*[I went to] all male grammar school. ... and when I started to work originally in my teens, when I left the school, I was working mainly then in the building trade. And that's macho men, you know in the building trade: bricklayers and plasterers, and labourers, and roofers – all very masculine. So, yeah, I would have grown up very much with the view "A man is a man". Yeah. Because of that those my early days ... so yeah, I think my opinion of masculinity was formed quite solidly before the age of 20.*

(Brian)

*"I think that partly could be some role models have played an influence, these people. So I would say that, for example, in the UK if you look at David Beckham, for example. David Beckham is somebody that takes care a lot of his appearance. He would not say that he is a traditional English person. So let's say, him and other people like him – they are probably very influential, very influential among certain parts of the society but also people on TV who go to shows, reality shows – oh not reality show, like [thinking] ... "X Factor". They take care a lot of their appearance, they have their style, they dress in a specific way. I think it's not marketing, it's more .... it's these role models who – because they have a lot of money to spend, they decided to take care a lot of their image because they are often on TV, they are often under the public scrutiny and I think they are an influential part of the society. But then the other part of society ... I don't know, honestly, I've never thought what's the reason ... Role models who are associated with masculinity, success..."*

(Andrea)

*I think some of it it's commercial. I think there is a growing market in male grooming products, isn't it. There is massive market now. Every single labelled brand is now selling male grooming products as well. You can't move for seeing them. I'm not that sort of person that necessarily looks and knows the difference between them ... necessarily but if I read something in the magazine and I see a product being advertised, not advertised but there is maybe a little review of it in the magazine, I will maybe look out for it in the shop and see whether it's something worth: a) can I afford it?; b) is it worth getting? and c) does it work? I will do that and I've done it.*

(William)

The influences of *sociocultural norms* and the *mass media*, as the excerpts above show, differ significantly. *Sociocultural norms* impose a traditional social order based on the criteria of heteronormativity and gender roles, whilst the *mass media* break these rules and impose new ways of constructing one's gender through consumption. If in the first instance male consumers are expected to behave according to their sex category, in the second case, they are, on the opposite, encouraged to consume products and services highly associated with the opposite sex. In this way, the *mass media* is creating new boundaries or making the existing gender boundaries more malleable.

The interconnection of those social forces was discussed in the following four interviews, conducted for theory verification purposes. In response to a leading question, the research participants admitted that *social pressure* exists:

*But the first bit of your theory was that there are these two basically conflicting spheres – yeah and yeah. Cause you are talking to a [profession] and I have got my own jargon of course, but I'll try not to put my own jargon in. But if you think about them as two different sort of cultures, yeah, certainly. In think that's part of the wider thing, so ... there is a particular culture that is rural Northumberland, which is very old and very conservative. Yeah, that's certainly that is in conflict with quite a lot of other things that are going. It's in conflict with what I would probably now call liberal values. In terms of liberal Britain and Europe, but also to some extent in conflict with a kind of media images that you have mentioned and the media images that you've mentioned are perhaps in line with kind of liberal Europe and America thing.*

(Samuel)

*Yeah it is. I think you have got the ... yeah it's what you just said – you've got the traditional pressure to go and be a man and have a job which brings a lot of money to support the family, but now you have got a social influence to look good and dress well. It's almost two different things. It's like a traditional man, who is very work focused, who is manly [chuckles], who isn't so influenced about how they appear but now you have got a younger generation which is coming in who are all about how they look, what clothes they wear, where they shop. And maybe in ten years' time when they first get their jobs, they not gonna be under pressure to be the breadwinner. And I think where we are now, it's ... we are in the middle, aren't we and we have got two separate worlds coming together.*

(Andrew)

The examples provided by Samuel and Andrew reflect the presence of *social pressure* in the current consumption market. Although both men represent the two opposing

dimensions of sexual orientation – the heterosexual and homosexual – and belong to the older and younger generation respectively, their answers speak about the same *social pressure* - to behave according to the traditional masculine values and to the new ones that encourage the new ways of body care.

Ben gives an example, specific to the region of the North East. He speaks about the development process of masculinities shaped by the historical context of this geographical location:

*I think the traditional view of the North East region is very, as you know, it is a very industrial area. It's got its roots in coal mining, ship building. So men generally, fifty, I think forty years ago were very much a man's man. Very much in the mind set of that wouldn't be a notion that a man would ever consider because it would be quite a feminine thing to do or it would be quite demasculating. But I think perceptions have changed slightly. Well, I say slightly, but I think in the last ten years perceptions have changed quite significantly, I would say, because men from the North East now have a reputation, which is akin to people from places like Essex and I don't know if you know. The nature of men in the North East I think has changed, because of the idea of reality television shows has changed in the North East region men. You probably not but you've probably heard of the "Geordie Shore", this Reality TV show.*

Nevertheless Ben believes that the North East region has changed a lot in how men are constructing and practicing their masculinities. According to him, the local men are developing a more open attitude towards changes in male gender roles due to the media impact that emancipates men from the strictly defined gender boundaries in consumption. Yet, sociocultural norms do the opposite and hold men to the old ways of constructing one's masculinity. Here is another excerpt from the same interview:

*Yeah in London I think it's a lot more acceptable, because again the North East region is very dominated by white British people without a doubt whereas other parts of the country – they are a lot more diverse in terms of culture, religion, race and so they had exposure not just to heterosexual, homosexual people but also different cultures they experience, different ways of religion. They are a lot more open to new things where people in the North East region I think are very stuck in the mind-set of there is sort of very preconceived notions of how things should be done. Where and I think that's because again it's rooted in the fact that the North East region was very much about two sorts of industries and these people never moved and nobody ever came in there. Why would they? So.*

(Ben)



The excerpts provided convey that each of the two social influences shapes men's attitudes, values and their behaviours as consumers in a different way. Their diverging impact will be discussed separately in the following sections.

## 5.5 Condition – Sociocultural norms

The concept of *sociocultural norms* in this theory plays the role of the condition, affecting the purchasing behaviour of the male spa visitors in the North East of England. This concept emerged during the first interview and, together with the notion of its significant impact on the consumption patterns of the male spa users, prevailed in the majority of narratives. The men interviewed, starting with the very first participant, initiated the discussion of how the deeply rooted *sociocultural norms* shape men's attitude and actions towards spas and the consumption of products or services of wellbeing and beauty in this part of the country. The influence of *sociocultural norms*, that control the behaviour of male spa consumers, appears to be strong, as John reveals:

*Well, I suppose if I was part of a culture where that was accepted, yes ... but ... but I don't belong to a culture, certainly not my age group. I have read that younger men are buying face creams ... What else? Face creams ... yeah. It's just in my generation ... wearing face cream is hardly more acceptable than jewellery. So most the men I know wouldn't wear any kind of jewellery. So like earrings or piercings or even a necklace.*

The rest of research participants share similar thoughts on men's dominant attitude towards spas, as a leisure activity. For example:

*... I think they [spas] are fine, but I think in this society, in this culture that we are in, especially in a working town like Newcastle, it's predominantly more looked on as a female thing. Maybe I sound a bit sexist but ... they go away on weekends, away to spa days, packages and so on and so forth. My mother does it, my sister – all the time.*

(Robert)

*Normally my wife goes regularly with her girlfriends to treatments or spas, or whatever. So it tends not to be, not a male sort of dominant area [...].*

(Steven)

As the interview extracts illustrate, culture plays an important part in people's lives, hence male individuals consciously or unconsciously try to conform to the values that current society projects and circumvent the beauty and wellbeing spaces for constructing male identities. The voices of the interviewed men reveal the widespread tendency even in contemporary times to differentiate activities into what is appropriate for men and women respectively in this region, and this situation explains why very few men choose spas for their leisure.

The challenge that contemporary men face in the North East is the decision of either complying with the *sociocultural norms* or emancipating themselves from the influence of the regional culture. The traditional understanding of masculinity still dominates in this part of the country, where the breadwinning role of a man is perceived as the core value of manhood, pushing aside other evolving qualities (e.g. aestheticism) from the spectrum of male characteristics:

*I think the most important thing for a man to be is a provider, really. I suppose, it goes back to the old – hunting, gatherer days, but a man should provide, a man should protect.*

(Brian)

*Because it's seen as a bit of – in a bit ... it's not really a man, it's not seen as a manly thing to do to go and get a manicure or sit and have a massage or whatever. It's just my opinion, not for me.*

(Robert)

Aestheticisation, which in the spa consumption context refers to the improvement of the body image, does not comprise the activities of the ideal man. This is how men in general think, given that this characteristic is perceived as irrelevant, narcissistic or unacceptable. In the view of the research participants, investment in physical appearance, particularly if beauty products or spa services are purchased for this reason, is understood to be a sign of vanity or an odd and unmanly activity. Scott and Jon's views reflect this position:

*I think the majority of males will think they are maybe ... vain. For guys to go and do this – I have to say I'd probably feel a bit the same actually to go to do the stuff like that.*

Scott

*I think you probably ... yeah. Yeah... most men ...they get a haircut as and when. So that might be useful. Broadly speaking — and I know I am the product of my upbringing — men do not, of my generation, seek to make themselves look pretty. Prettification if you like. We expect women to do it because they always have. But men, generally speaking, would not seek to conceal their age through creams or makeup. You would never expect, you never — I have heard of younger men wearing foundation and also this cream, this powder and some younger men do their eyes. Put makeup on their eyes.*

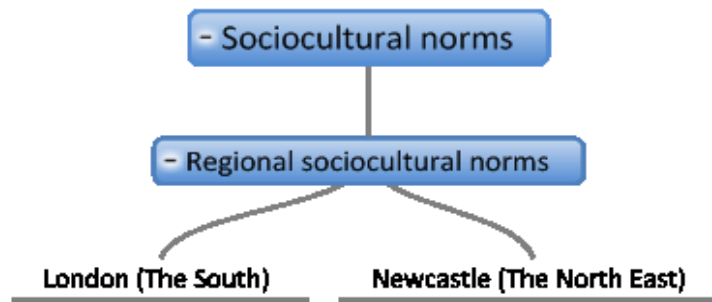
John

Both examples refer to the sociocultural influence. The excerpts speak about the tendency to regard body beautification as inappropriate activity for a man. While Scott describes an explicit body grooming as a vain act, John perceives it as a completely unconventional activity especially for those men, who come from the older generation. He adds that for young men body aestheticisation might be seen as a norm or at least acceptable, yet, Scott contradicts this by admitting being indifferent to cosmetics and spa services except those that are part of the gym membership.

The shared experiences of the male interviewees leave no doubt about the significant influence of the *sociocultural norms* on what products and services should be consumed by each gender, and this in particular is pertinent to the consumers in the North East although some examples also apply beyond this geographical region.

### **5.5.1 Regional sociocultural norms**

*Sociocultural norms* related to male gender roles and values in the theory of social pressure serve, as a macro condition, constraining men's consumption practices in the North East. Due to their restraining impact, *sociocultural norms* in this part of the country appear to be stagnant. During the interviews the study participants openly shared their beliefs about more flexible sociocultural standards in another part of the country. It was noticed that in London the situation is completely different, given that the male consumers' choice of what and how to consume is not being negatively evaluated by society. It appears that men in London do not experience confrontation about their consumption decisions with regards to spa visits or body care. The evidence gathered divides the category of *sociocultural norms* into a subcategory, such as *regional sociocultural norms*, which is then dimensionally divided into *the South* and *the North East*, as the research participants chose to differentiate (see Figure 5.4).



**Figure 5.4:** Subcategories of regional sociocultural norms

The concept “*regional sociocultural norms*” explains men’s disinterest in spas due to the deeply rooted perception that spas in the North East of England are a women’s prerogative. Interview excerpts illustrate a completely different male attitude towards spas, body beautification and towards other men consuming spa services in *the South* and in *the North East*. According to Thomas, who was raised in the North East and currently works in London, the purchasing behaviour of male spa consumers in London is explicitly different to the behaviour of male spa attendees in Newcastle and what is more important, this difference is highly influenced by the local *sociocultural norms*, to which he adjusts accordingly:

*... to my London friends I do [share spa experiences] and we go together, but to my North East friends, cause, obviously, I am from up here, I don't.*

*[...] I would say in the past year or so, especially in London where I live, is more men – you see more men in there. And they are getting a lot more treatments as well. [...] I see a lot more men there [in London] and people are looking after themselves more.*

Andrew and William agree with Thomas. They suggest that in the North East heteronormative expectations are still much stronger than in London where diversification in gender practices is greeted more openly. Andrew and William highlight these regional differences:

*North East. I think that's probably, I think it's even more feminine. I think in London, if you go further south, it is more acceptable. I think we are quite slow to adjust to that. I think as a little county in the North East, we are quite, still quite bloky and I think that's don't think that's gonna change any time soon. I think with industries we've had here, so like ... like look at Teeside all that industries they have got in Middlesbrough – we are quite slow to catch on to anything like that. I think guys still go to barbers to get*

*their haircuts as opposed to hairdressers. So I think that's just what it's like up here in the North.*

(Andrew)

*But not in Newcastle still slightly – I think if we were having this interview in London, it would be quite different because of the diversity and the diverse influences and sort of like far more flexible lifestyles that people live there than they do here. I think there is still an element here you have got to understand, I suppose, there is a real tradition here within Newcastle. It's a bit like – There is new bars, new clubs, new restaurants, cafes – changes all the time but there is still a lump and group of people that still go to the same bars, pubs that they've always gone to, they always go to. They never go anywhere else. And they still go home and have their fish and chips every night. They have their dinner on the table and if the dinner is not on the table they will [be] complaining to the wife and there is still an element of that. I think it still runs through this particular part of the country. Traditional, still sort of setting – stereotypical sort of ...*

(William)

*Sociocultural norms* not only contribute to maintaining spa consumption as gendered in the Northern part of the country, but also set a tone for prejudiced attitudes towards male spa users and their presupposed sexual orientation. Brian, who comes from the North West, describes gender expectations as conservative:

*So you kind of grow up with that ... – I suppose, I hate to say, but going to spas and taking beauty treatments are not for men, they are for men who are gay, basically. It's very much the mentality when I was growing up.*

His view shows that similar normative gender expectations are being applied not only in the North East but also in the North West. The heteronormative constructions of masculinity are being perceived as ideal and prevail in the Northern part of England, where the opposite behaviour is attributed to those, who belong to another dimension of sexual orientation - homosexuals.

The comparative information with regards to the behaviour of male spa users in *the South* and *the North East* of England emerged naturally in this study. Since majority of the male respondents were originally from the North East and considering that the data collection was carried out in this part of the country, the interviews naturally provided information that brought an insight into the male spa consumer behaviour that dominates in this region. The region of *the South* was selected by the participants themselves, as the comparative point to reflect the contrast in men's behaviour in two parts of England.

It has to be noted that the research participants, when they analysed the differences between *the South* and *the North East*, selected London and Newcastle as the **main** points of the mentioned regions. Such attribution did not change even during the analysis of the data gathered. Strauss and Corbin (1998) recommend reflecting on the theory grounded in the mindset of the social actors interviewed by using categories that naturally emerge from the data, however, in this study the two cities mentioned will be used as symbols rather than as statistically generalised representations of *regional sociocultural norms*.

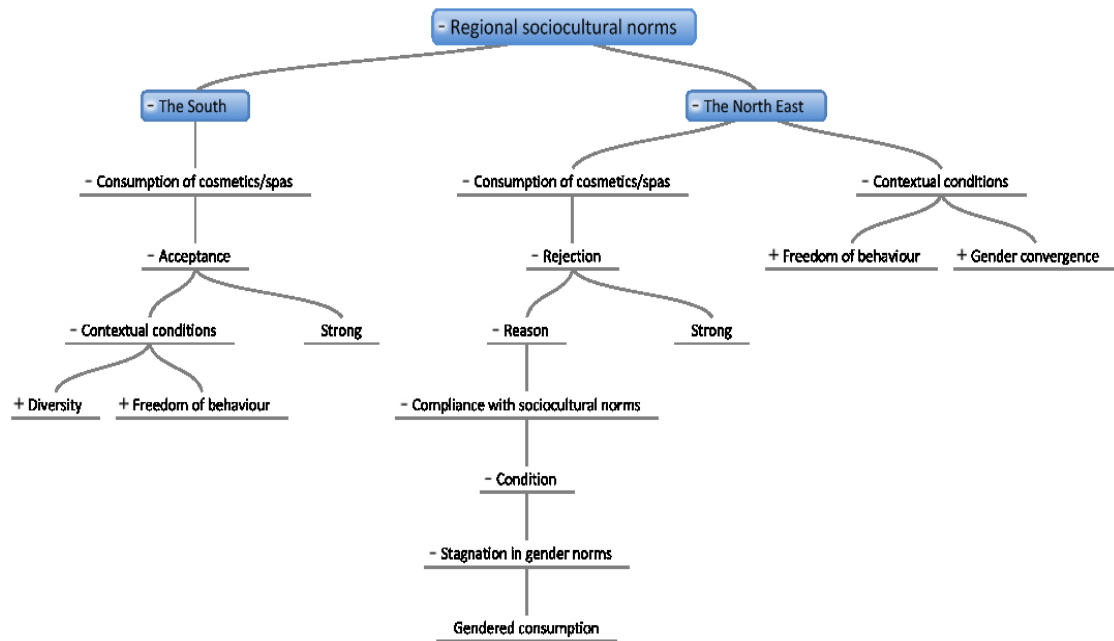
The majority of the men interviewed spoke about the different spa consumption trends in the two regions. In addition, at the beginning of the data collection their credibility was verified through theoretical sampling. The researcher was looking specifically for a participant from a different cultural background to check whether *sociocultural norms* in another country also have an impact on consumer behaviour. It was discovered that *sociocultural norms* in Italy also play the role of a macro condition, which can influence the behaviour of male consumers when choosing spa services for leisure. For example, Andrea compared the diverging behaviour of Italian men in the two regions – the South and the North of Italy. He argued that Northern Italians are more interested in their wellbeing, with people of all ages using spa services, while for the Southern Italians spas are still seen as a utilitarian activity, designed for the older consumer market to improve their health:

*Yeah, the difference is that probably people here are more conscious that if they go, they have a nice body or they look better, because I have seen people of different age, while in Italy probably you would see, in Italy in the North you would probably see people of different ages, but in the South you would see only old people.*

*It's very popular in Milan, in Milan I knew it was popular: when I was working in Milan some people used to go there, but in the rest of Italy ... no ... sauna – no, not really.*

It appears that in England the considered regions – *the South* and *the North East* – have the opposite impact in comparison to Italy, hence, for these reasons the sociocultural traditions of both countries were not directly compared in this study. In addition, information on Italian culture with regards to men's motives for spa attendance was only sought to justify that *sociocultural norms*, despite their geographical location, have a strong impact on shaping the consumption patterns and preferences of male consumers.

Returning to the notion of *regional sociocultural norms*, the concept *stagnation in gender norms* emerged as a micro condition, which plays the role of an obstacle. It obstructs the male spa users in *the North East* from entering spa facilities without fear of being marginalised (see Figure 5.5 and excerpt from interview No. 13):



**Figure 5.5:** Graphical depiction of regional sociocultural norms

*Oh, a lot, definitely a stigma attached to that. In the North East there is still a stigma attached to gay people and the idea of grooming and things like that in particular pockets. I mean I could take you somewhere, various places, where is even if you mentioned that men went to a spa, you would be kind of ostracised from society.*

(Ben)

As a result of stagnation, the leisure and wellbeing industry struggles to attract male consumers in *the North East*, and thus, remains unpopular in the male consumer market, with its female counterpart maintaining the status of loyal clientele. This cannot be said about *the South*, where specific consumption practices are not solely assigned to males or females:

*A big difference from – if I'm in London and I go to a spa, I would say about 40% is men, whereas in Newcastle it's about 10% is men.*

(Thomas)

*So I think that's a lot what influenced men and especially in this region because the culture in this region is very different to a culture, say, in the southern region in the UK. Where it is a lot more diverse, you know London, where is a lot more acceptance on men doing things that probably steps outside of the traditional roles whereas in the North East – there are still the pockets in the North East that are like that, like city centres like Newcastle, Durham and places like that are quite a lot more open to diversification than in the sort of small pockets and towns in the region still.*

(Ben)

*I mean they [cousins from London] groom, they dress smart, they look after their appearance. These are the guys that use the aftershaves, grooming products from when they were at university. Now they are in their late thirties. No, mid-thirties. Mid to thirty-six or something I think. So, they are like and they are about ... and they grew up with that. So they have had that all through from the very early age. I remember going to visit them and they have had an aftershave, I've never seen the aftershave before when I was that age.*

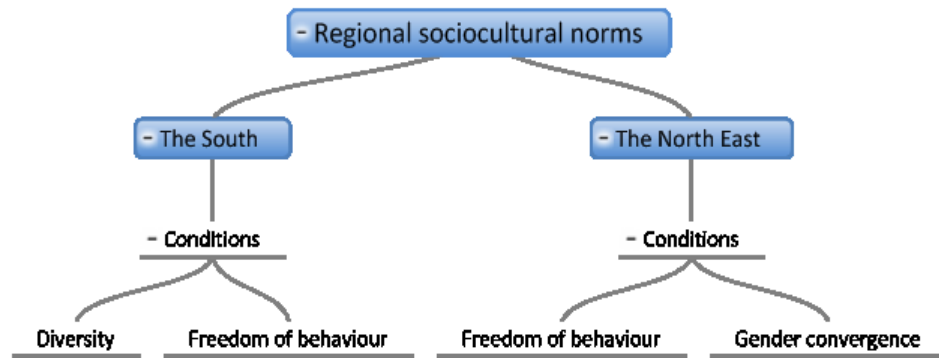
(William)

The percentage of male spa attendees given here suggests that investment in one's wellbeing and physical appearance is far more practiced and appreciated by male consumers in London. In the south of the country, grooming and wellbeing practices, as Ben and William suggests, are accepted among men because of the contextual conditions, such as the *freedom of behaviour* and *diversity*. In *the North East*, however, despite the presence of *gender convergence* and the *freedom of behaviour*, the use of cosmetics and the idea of practising spas as a leisure activity in general remain unfavourable among the Northern males. The influence of the micro conditions listed is explained in the subsection provided below.

#### **5.5.1.1 Micro contextual conditions**

The micro conditions that create a more favourable social environment for consumption choices in *the South* are *diversity* and *freedom of behaviour* (see Figure 5.6 below).





**Figure 5.6:** Minor conditions of “regional sociocultural norms”

Participants agree on their positive impact on the male gender practices, allowing men to do their gender according to men’s understanding and preferences. On the contrary, in *the North East* this becomes more difficult due to another minor condition – the *stagnation in gender norms*, which keeps consumption practices gendered:

*I think it's true. Yeah, women will go as a social activity together, "Let's go to have a day at a spa". Men wouldn't do that, that's true. Well, not in my experience. That's true.*

(Samuel)

Yet, John, who has been using spa services to improve his health after a sport accident or while taking relaxing breaks with his wife, does not completely reject spas from the spectrum of his leisure. On the opposite, he appreciates spa healing properties and its overall positive impact on his fitness and wellbeing:

*Well there is never really been any ... I can't detect in the influences that I have been exposed to any disdain for going to a spa. We kind of have grown up thinking, well, that's what the Romans and the Greeks did and there is just a way of keeping fit, keeping toned, keeping cleaned ... and that's it. It's actually good for fitness and good for healing. So that's acceptable. But when it comes to the other, as you've said in your work, the other products, we would ignore. I'd walk right past them. I have no idea what's in all those jars.*

John speaks about spas as an appropriate male activity, however, only to some degree. He sets clear gender boundaries by stating that men attend spas since these wellbeing spaces offer great benefits. However, he excludes those practices that involve a beautifying aspect. In this way, John supports the heteronormative notion, earlier mentioned by Samuel. The cited perspectives imply that spas are not fully

accepted by men due to the stagnant gender norms that still differentiate leisure practices into masculine and feminine despite gender convergence in many spheres of life.

The concepts *gender convergence*, *diversity* and *freedom of behaviour* play the role of contextual minor conditions and, as Figure 5.5 above shows, they are present in both regions – *the South* and *the North East*. Nevertheless, their influence is different. In *the South* of England they seem to have a strong positive impact on men's attitude and the use of grooming products by allowing men to step outside the boundaries of heteronormative expectations. In *the Northern* part of the country the mentioned contextual conditions remain ineffective. Henceforth, the dimension of rejecting spas and cosmetic products in *the North East* is strong, while the acceptance of products provided by the beauty and wellbeing industry in *the South* is more tolerated, and thus, positively strong (see Figure 5.5 above).

As research participants explained, the consumption of spas and cosmetics is predominantly rejected in *the North East* because of the *stagnant gender norms*. In this part of the country masculinities are constructed in a very traditional way. For this reason, men would not cross the settled gender boundaries, as Ben indicates:

*I think from the town that I come from originally, which is traditionally a coal mining town, there is still pressure in that sort of place for you to be very masculine in the sense that you wouldn't really do those things. A lot of people in the smaller towns would still see that as being a sort of, that something that they would consider that only women would do or gay men would do without a doubt. And still I think there is quite a lot of pockets of the North East that are like that. But generally the people who would want to do things like go to spas, live in city centres where it is a lot more diverse. So I don't think if they want to live their lives in that way they have to move somewhere where it's more diverse. Because they know they just couldn't stay in that town if they wanted to get a new way.*

*Stagnation in gender norms* remains the main minor constraint in the current historical and geographical area of *the North East* of England, disallowing other forms of masculinity except the hegemonic one from being completely and socially legitimised. Thus, for the same reasons consumption practices in *the North East* remain gendered. The following subsection of this chapter will look at this in more detail.

## Gendered consumption

The sociocultural environment described above is the outcome of the solidly grounded gender norms, mentioned earlier, which still differentiate consumption spheres into what is specifically appropriate for men or women today. The answers of research participants clearly convey this perspective, by contributing to the notion that certain consumption activities have strong associations with a specific sex. Even without being asked, the male respondents unanimously identified spas and beautification as the concern of female consumers:

*I think a gym activity, going to a match together, drinking together, socialising together. I think that is sort of male stereotype, isn't? But not going to a spa to beautify themselves, no.*

(Steven)

*I think it's seen as quite as feminine things to do to go to a spa. So I think I could be quite aware that it would be probably less males there than females. And a lot of my girlfriends go to spa treatments all the time.*

(Andrew)

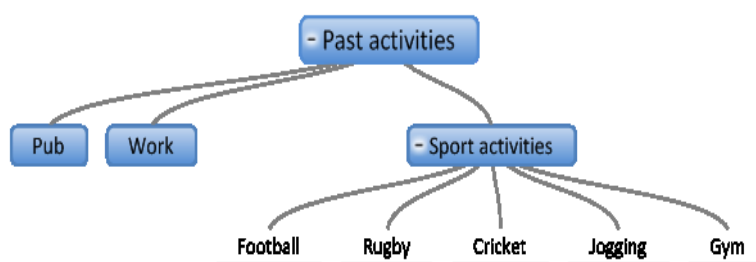
Steven and Andrew have different backgrounds. They differ from each other by their work sectors, age and sexual orientation (see Appendix C), yet their views convey the same notion that spa consumption is not a typical male activity. This leisure practice clearly falls outside the boundaries of heteronormativity, extensively applied to any social activities and further supporting gender binary in consumption.

Scott also extends the theme of gendered activities. He mentions his own profession, which is also being more associated with a particular gender. According to him, working in the art industry is regarded as a less masculine way of earning one's income. Although Scott is the one who argued that masculine values are changing, in his answer we also hear the notion of physical activity being a part of a man's life:

*I don't know really. It's different for me because I am working in a musical: a lot of the guys are not really masculine. This profession is typical and I have been doing it for about a year, so I don't know really but ... I think to keep fit and healthy is important. There are so many people who let themselves get fat and don't look after their health ... And it's not just about getting fat and not in shape. It's also about health. I think I don't get ill as much when I go to the gym because you are sweating and stuff. If I can go two or three times a week in a winter, I find that improves my health and immune system ... But yeah, I don't know, masculine value, I think, it's changing all the time.*

The topic of women's activities during data collection was not extended further, given that this doctoral study aimed to explain how the current sociocultural environment shapes the male spa consumer behaviour in the *North East*. Hence, the foremost attention was given to explore men's consumption patterns in the context of consumption of spa and grooming products.

During the data collection men were asked to comment on the current values of masculinity and what activities appear to be common among men both in the past and present. Based on the evidence gathered, men's practices have been described in relation to the *past* and *present time dimensions* (see Figure 5.7 and Figure 5.8 below).



**Figure 5.7:** Men's activities in the past

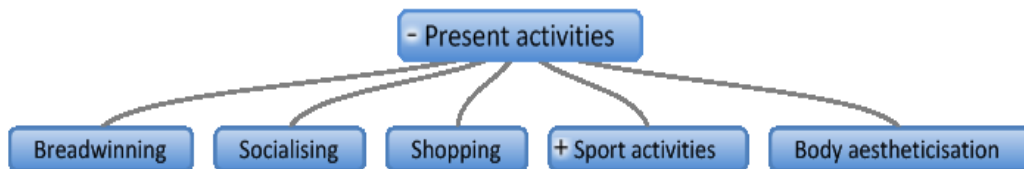
*[Men] did running, rugby, football was around, cricket – they did all that kind of stuff. But probably gyms weren't ... Why you would do gyms? 'Cos the likes of cardio vascular and the benefits that weren't relevant at that time. As I say, they wouldn't, they smoked and they didn't think there was any problems with smoking. So health wasn't a big issue but to keep fit it would be a national service and various different sports.*

(Michael)

*It's a balancing act, isn't it, as opposed to what it was a long time ago – hardly any exercise, too much alcohol, too much pub, hard work...*

(Robert)

As the interviewees recall, workout and pub activities were part of men's daily lives for previous generations. Nowadays, men continue to improve their health and wellbeing through gym and sport and do not discard the traditional role of a man to be a breadwinner (see Figure 5.8):



**Figure 5.8:** Men's present public activities

The majority of the research participants behave according to the traditional perception of masculinity or heteronormative standards. Based on the empirical evidence, the interviewees associate masculine values with providing financial stability for a family, as well as actively engaging in physical activities through sport or attendance at the gym. It shows that traditional male gender roles remain stable in *the North East* of the country, keeping work and sport as key institutions for male gender constructions. The view of Scott (see above), Andrea, Thomas and Brian illustrate the current desirable male characteristics among the contemporary manhood:

Well, as somebody I would say – a man who is responsible, who takes care of the family, with material, with babies, who is responsible with babies.

(Andrea)

*Gym, going to the gym and keeping fit. That was like going to the gym and the weights is the main thing I associate with men and masculine, masculinity and looking after themselves.*

(Thomas)

*Men, when they get to the middle age, there is a tendency to balloon out and you go overweight. So I always try and go to the gym and do a bit of sport, just to try to keep in shape.*

(Brian)

Men's interest in getting into better shape and achieve a desirable masculine physique, which, from the perspective of men appears to be lean and fit, has not changed radically in comparison with previous male generations. Physical prowess and endurance have always been sought by men, and the evidence of this pursuit among men originates from the early days of the last century. Michael illustrates this by providing an example about his grandfathers' ways of constructing masculine identities:

*Well my grandfathers would have been fit because they were in the army, in the national service so they had kept themselves fit doing that way. [...] [They] did running, rugby, football was around, cricket – they did all that kind of stuff.*

In addition, the social aspect remains an important factor in the construction process of contemporary masculinities. Men continue to spend time together in a pub environment; nevertheless, they also slowly embrace other activities that are often associated with the opposite sex, for instance, shopping and body aestheticization. Physical attractiveness or *body aestheticization* is more associated with the contemporary male ideal. This was not the case in the past century, as John and Andrea illustrate:

*[...] But they, generally speaking, they wouldn't have had the free time or the money to indulge in any of those activities. So generally speaking ... if I think perhaps of my generation, my wife's generation, they were too busy working to think of what they looked like.*

(John)

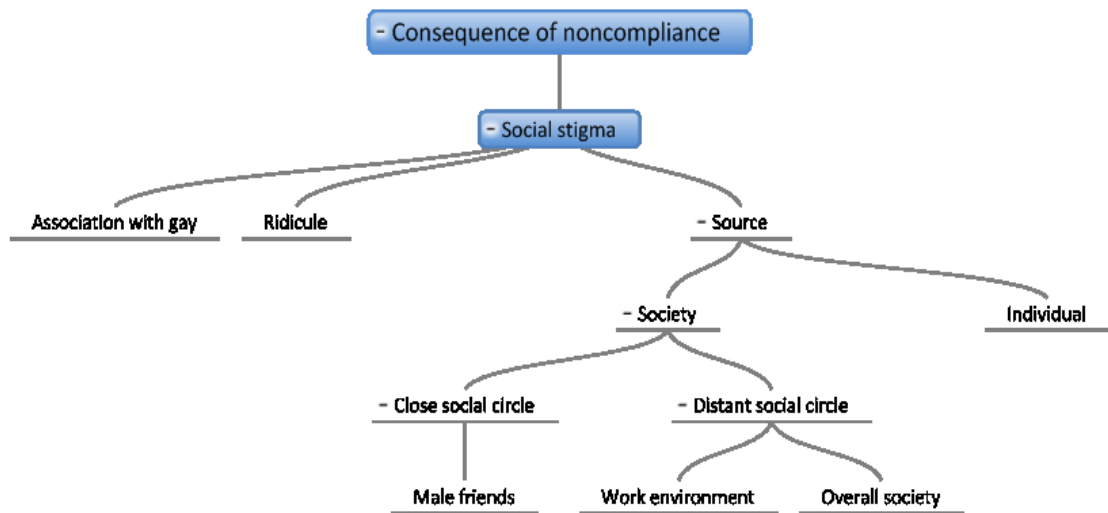
*So if I look at my parents – none of them took care of their physical appearance apart from the way of dressing. But now you can see that people spend a lot of money, a lot of time taking care of their [physical appearance] ... how they look. And it's changed a lot during the last ten years.*

(Andrea)

Both men agree that taking care of one's physical appearance was not a dominant and normative way of constructing masculinity in the past. In fact, their examples refer to both men and women and imply that physical appearance became emphasised as part of the constructions of femininity and masculinity only in recent years. However, if for women beautification is regarded as natural, for men changing grooming practices still remain non-heteronormative and lead to unpleasant consequences, which are all embraced under the category called *social stigma*.

#### **5.5.1.2 Consequences – social stigma**

As the data reveals, men tend to obey the male gender roles and perform their gender well by engaging in activities that are associated with the male gender stereotypes. The consequences for noncompliance with *sociocultural norms* is *social stigma*, which takes the form of *ridicule* and *associations with homosexuality* (see Figure 5.9).



**Figure 5.9:** Consequences of noncompliance

*Stigma* appears to be socially undesirable, and this detail explains men's resistance to cross gender boundaries during consumption. In the proposed theory, the themes of *association with gay* people and *ridicule* play the role of negative consequences. Heterosexual men can encounter the issues of marginalisation, if they choose to embrace the recently evolved masculine roles, closely related to women or homosexuals:

*Oh, a lot, definitely a stigma attached to that. In the North East there is still a stigma attached to gay people and the idea of grooming and things like that in particular pockets. I mean I could take you somewhere, various places, where is even if you mentioned that men went to a spa you would be kind of ostracised from society.*

(Ben)

Despite the existing *freedom of action*, the options for gender free consumption among men appear to be limited in *the North East*. Male clients cannot yet freely exercise their right to consume what they want or even with whom they want. This predominantly concerns the wellbeing and cosmetic industry. Spas are one of the most affected businesses and even until now are perceived to be designed for the requirements of female consumers.

The decision to purchase a spa visit or enhance one's physical looks by using cosmetics comes at a price. Men, who are concerned about their physical appearance, contravene the *sociocultural norms* and as a result become socially stigmatised for

their actions. Hence, their identities can be labelled effeminate or homosexual. As the collected evidence shows, the negative evaluation in relation to men's spa practices comes both from the *close social circle* (i.e. male friends) and a far more *distant circle* (i.e. society). After a visit to the spa and after sharing his experiences with his male friends, Steven receives remarks about his sexuality:

*Just on the basis that obviously, without being prejudiced, it tends to be sort of gay men look after themselves better than heterosexuals. So it was that sort of slant.*

John mentions the same type of social pressure. According to him, any acts of body aestheticisation, including a workout resulting in a big masculine physique would invoke ridicule from his close social circle:

*But I think I am very much a product of my generation. In my generation the only – it's not unacceptable, for example, to have – this watch is functional but also looks good as far as ... Men of my generation would choose what they thought were fashionable clothes [laughs] not averse to the odd label. Sort of thing. But not when it comes to a physical appearance ...– Ah, the nearest thing to this in the physical appearance would be working out. So, for example, to try to have a certain physique has always been desirable for men, to have perhaps a more masculine physique rather than non-masculine physique. I don't think that's changed but I don't think that applies to all men. But ... on the other hand if it was too obvious, that would also be unacceptable. So if I started to look like one of the bouncers of the night clubs, people would — I respect my friends rightly to take, to ridicule me. A very British thing: ridicule anybody who thinks that they are what they are not.*

While John agrees with the younger male spa consumers that building a masculine physique at the gym is one of the ways of doing masculinity, it can also become a non-normative act like body beautification if it was too much emphasised. John expects to receive negative reactions from his friends if he engaged in both types of practices.

The following examples reveal the general view of society regarding the nature or the purpose of a spa business and the attitude towards its male spa clients:

*But here in the UK people they look at these things as gay things and probably also for the sauna, which is the place where you go for ... for your appearance, basically, for your body, for your skin, for cleansing yourself, for relaxing. It would be perceived the same as people that use to cut their eyebrows and use [touches his lower eyelid][eye creams]*

(Andrea)



*I suppose, I hate to say, but going to spas and taking beauty treatments are not for men, they are for men who are gay basically. It's very much the mentality when I was growing up.*

(Brian)

Since spa practices are exclusively attributed to female gender roles, male consumers can be regarded as those, who trespass the boundaries of heteronormativity. The connotation to homosexuality gives an insinuation that going to a spa is outside the heteronormative behaviour. The consumption of spa services even for the reasons of relaxation do not go together with the prevalent male gender norms in *the North East* despite the witnessed *gender convergence* and *freedom of behaviour* (see Figure 5.6 above). These social circumstances should supposedly assist men in doing their gender well and differently (Mavin and Grandy, 2012, 2013), and hence, could allow them to consume not only the services of sport and wellbeing but also of beauty in spas across *the North East* and beyond. Nevertheless, this does not seem to be an easily achievable objective.

In further exploring the notion of men's practices, it is worth noting that despite minor changes in men's leisure preferences, as was discussed in subsection about gendered consumption (see p.116), a new trend can be noticed in the male consumer market. *Shopping* and *body aestheticization*, particularly in the home environment, are more often included in men's routines:

*I do like to try and take pride in my appearance: I buy designer clothes; I try not to wear inappropriate clothes for my age. So I always try to look smart.*

(Brian)

*It's changing a lot because also in the UK people – there are cosmetic products for a male and I think that five years ago there was no market for these products. So the male is changing, he is taking care more of his physical appearance, of his aesthetics. Also I think there is an increase in plastic surgery – it's not just for females, it's also for males. Males increasingly do plastic surgery, they go to a gym. Gym also was not as popular as it is today ten, fifteen years ago.*

(Andrea)

*Yeah, some would. Definitely! I would say out of the people in the age bracket between the age of twenty to twenty-five, young males who are active in sort of on night club scenes and things like that. The majority of*

*young people in the North East I would say will, in relation to spas, I think probably ten, fifteen percent like go for specific treatments. I do think that. And out of vast majority of the others will do some degree of self-grooming on their own. And I think that is a fundamental shift because twenty, thirty years ago males of the same age wouldn't be doing that sort of thing.*

(Ben)

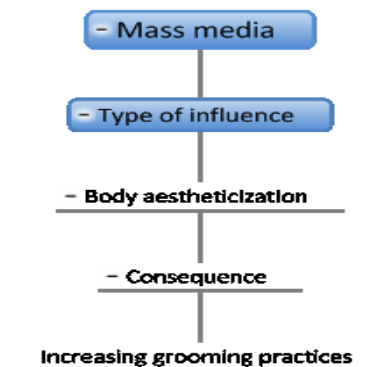
The contemporary men are depicted in these excerpts as taking care of themselves and not being indifferent to how they look. The first example is more personal, while the second and the third one provide an overview of the changes in the overall UK male market. Brian, despite seeing spas and body aestheticisation in general as a feminine or homosexual activity, perceives physical appearance as important. He is proud of the way he looks and enhances his physical attractiveness by purchasing smart designer menswear. His statements about the spa use and his way of looking after himself reinforce the heteronormative perspective. He differentiates the appropriate way of doing masculinity from inappropriate or non-heteronormative way through traditional behaviour patterns. Everything that is closely related to femininity, including visits to spas or body aestheticisation, is perceived outside the boundaries of heteronormativity.

Yet, the following excerpts speak about more open attitude to the new ways of grooming. Andrea and Ben notice changes in the whole male market and suggest that a growing attention to one's physical appearance changes the perceptions of masculinity. Andrea and Ben list new masculine practices (i.e. the use of cosmetics, surgical interventions and spa visits) and identify them as more easily acceptable by the contemporary men than it was in the past. This suggests that the boundaries of heteronormativity are widening and allowing men a wider variety of masculinity constructions to choose from. The social agency, which forces men to embrace new activities in their consumption, is the *mass media*. Its influence on the consumption of products and services, which can enhance one's physical appearance, will be discussed in section 5.6.

## **5.6 Condition – mass media**

Another important contextual macro condition, which shapes the behaviour of contemporary male consumers, is the *mass media*. Predominantly men's lifestyle magazines and reality television contribute to creating *social pressure*, because its

influence contradicts the prevalent *sociocultural norms*. The *mass media*, as admitted by the research participants, encourage male consumers to embrace *body aestheticization* as a legitimate form of consumption through grooming and styling practices (see Figure 5.10 below).



**Figure 5.10:** Mass media influence

Activities enhancing one's physical appearance appear to be novel to men, considering that until recently these practices were assigned to the consumption domain of women. Nevertheless, there is evidence to suggest that the *media* are slowly changing the consumption patterns of men and shifting the attention of male consumers from traditional male gender roles towards more modern ones. Steven points out:

*But to start with, when it's something new isn't that people tend – if guys are of the particular age would think, "Well, I've never done it, so there is no reason to do", but the younger guys with the fashion magazines and health regimes you read about every day I think they are more inclined to use it [treatments/cosmetics].*

In this excerpt Steven mentions the younger generation of men as the core consumers of cosmetics. Yet, William, despite being older, also admits being influenced on body grooming by the *mass media*. He provides evidence by referring to the growing male market for cosmetics in the UK and to his own way of purchasing cosmetics following the influence of the media:

*I think some of it it's commercial. I think there is a growing market in male grooming products, isn't it. There is massive market now. Every single labelled brand is now selling male grooming products as well. You can't move for seeing them. I'm not that sort of person that necessarily looks and knows the difference between them ... necessarily but if I read something in the magazine and I see a product being advertised, not advertised but there is maybe a little review of it in the magazine, I will*

*maybe look out for it in the shop and see whether it's something worth: a) can I afford it?; b) is it worth getting? and c) does it work? I will do that and I've done it.*

The examples given by Steven and William convey the notion of new grooming practices becoming more acceptable among the contemporary male consumers. Men cannot avoid the mass media impact on how to look after themselves and are becoming more tolerant to the new ways of grooming, involving cosmetics and visits to spa centres. According to Steven, the contemporary men, as overall society in general, have got more advantages than in the past and some of them have been created by the media:

*I would guess probably to a limited degree cause I don't think the facilities were available as our or were available as there are now: in the frequency, in the locality, in the ease of use and also free time and expenditure. Cause people have had, have got more free time. More disposable income so I think it's far better now than it was years ago and I don't think, again, through the generations I think that it's something people learn about their experiences and continue to do as opposed to something that ... previously – with the media and advertising they are able to do it and see it and experience it whereas in the past the media and exposure hasn't been the same so ... and also the advantages and disadvantages have not been able to do it, with free time and cash ...*

Although opportunities for self-attention are becoming more available for men due to more income and free time, yet it is also the *mass media* that change male consumer preferences. The mass media are spreading around new images of masculinity. Samuel highlights this new trend, which, as he describes, sometimes can be worrying:

*Well I suppose the worrying images the ones that are all about perfection, about some kind of unrealistic ideal, including pornography. And the way that's get into everything else. So ... the images of models in magazines are not radically different to a kind of pornography. So these are quite difficult, quite challenging and quite worrying trends, but at the same time there are some that are relatively harmless. So a Brad Pitt or George Clooney or whoever they are. They don't seem terribly threatening and worrying to me. I mean they are good looking fellows and clever and charming and all the rest of it but that doesn't seem to be a bad thing.*

Depicting men as being admired and desired (Coad, 2008), the broadcast and print *media* construct a new perception of masculinity. The advertisements of cosmetics and attractive and sexy male images encourage men to enter the consumption area of the opposite sex (i.e purchase skincare products, dress in a more elegant and colourful style) and pay the same level of attention to their physical appearance as women have always done:

*Yeah... It's a difficult question. I wouldn't like to say why. I don't know really. It's just I think its ... I think it's mainly that the beauty side of it, the treatment side of it has always been pushed by women's advertising and publicity and focussed on females as opposed to males in the last probably twenty years where there is a difference now. I think it might be that sort of...*

(Steven)

*Yeah, probably, I think that the media is getting really good now. I think back to maybe even five years ago if you read a gossip magazine, who is the worst dressed and the best dressed, that's normally would be that stereotypical for women, but now I think men could appear there as well. So I think men have got more pressure to dress well. I think even shops like "Next", which typically was for the older man, not for older man but for a more mature man. I think even that's now become a trendy shop – it's about looking at future trends and trying to capture them. I think that will be if somebody who was my age would say that shopped at "Marks&Spencer", that's probably not cool. It's probably quite a bit "Oh, what you are doing?" Whereas probably ten years ago was quite acceptable to shop at "Marks&Spencer" being thirty.*

(Andrew)

Yet, new grooming styles is not the only area that the media influence men on. It is also known for its contribution in promoting men's interest in fitness and wellbeing. The sociocultural climate, created by the *media*, motivates men to look after themselves through stricter fitness regimes and healthy lifestyle:

*You always see people jogging and going to a gym. Gyms have been around for a long time. I don't think that's changed. I think people's perceptions of keeping fit have been awakened by certain campaigns and obviously television: "stop smoking", "stop drinking", "get fit" and stuff like that. So yeah, I think there is more to it, I've noticed.*

(Michael)

Furthermore, William notices that the mass media have a powerful influence on consumer behaviour. By taking an observers' position he comments on how consumers react to the mass media's exposed images. According to him, media form consumer perceptions of attractiveness and the body ideal. To achieve that standard many men embark on fitness at the gyms:

*Yeah. And maybe we should be more comfortable in our bodies and maybe there is something about and we should look at our bodies in a healthy way. I think. Unfortunately, I think ... there is a lot of influences*

*there, isn't? We are bombarded with body images all the time: we meant to look in a certain way, we meant to do certain things. To get healthy, you go to – men go to gyms. To be healthy, women go for classes ... whether it would be palates or whatever or yoga. Not as many men do classes as women.*

The *media* introduce consumers to a healthy living. While some men opt for gyms to build a leaner physique, other men choose relaxation and indulgence in spas despite the widespread assumption that spa businesses are created for the needs of female customers. Andrea and Michael illustrate this:

*I am not – the doctor did not prescribe me to go there. I am just going there because I think it is good for the skin, for health as well and also for breaking from stress and to relax.*

(Andrea)

*I think men now, I think historically have been a lot busier but I think men go to saunas, steam rooms and gyms and stuff like that rather than go for a massage or a ... I think that's probably what more men do because it fits with their image. But I think the younger men so called metrosexuals are probably ... I'd think probably go to spas and stuff, I would think.*

(Michael)

Changes that occur in the area of male grooming are the after effects of the behaviour projected by celebrities, known as *role models*. They shape the actions of society, by teaching its members to be more innovative in the context of consumption and self-attentiveness. The impact of *role models* on contemporary manhood in the Northern East will be discussed in the following subsection of this chapter.

### **5.6.1 Role models**

The most effective and influential media sources appear to be TV programmes, particularly the Reality TV shows and magazines. According to the research participants, personalities depicted in the entertainment programmes play the part of *role models*, given that they promote new lifestyles, tastes and the consumption of brands and images. The research participants mentioned several names, which can inspire their behaviour, and this includes the football star David Beckham, the TV producer and entrepreneur Simon Cowell, the TV and radio presenter George Lamb, as well as such TV programmes as “Geordie Shore”, “The only way is Essex” and “Made in Chelsea”. However, in this theory whilst undertaking the research only the

footballer David Beckham and the TV programme “Geordie Shore” will be mentioned, as they were the most frequently referred to by the men in this research.

#### 5.6.1.1 David Beckham

Among the most popular *role models* in British society is David Beckham. During data collection this personality emerged as an inspiring individual. His projected images and style stimulate men to pay more attention to their physical appearance. “*Oh yeah, of course, and you see photographs in the newspaper of David Beckham on the beach. Everybody wants to look like David Beckham and I’ll look at men of my generation*”, - says Brian.

*I think it’s probably has a lot do with the celebrity culture. The idea that you see people like David Beckham or footballers, and these men, who footballers are traditionally very masculine but all these men are very well pristine, perfect bodies, tanned, well-groomed. The majority would see a footballer a very masculine entity. So they look at them and think “We really wanna be like those people and in order to do that we want to emulate them not just in sort of what they do for a job, but also we wanna look like them and have the same sort of respect in society or whatever happens to them.*

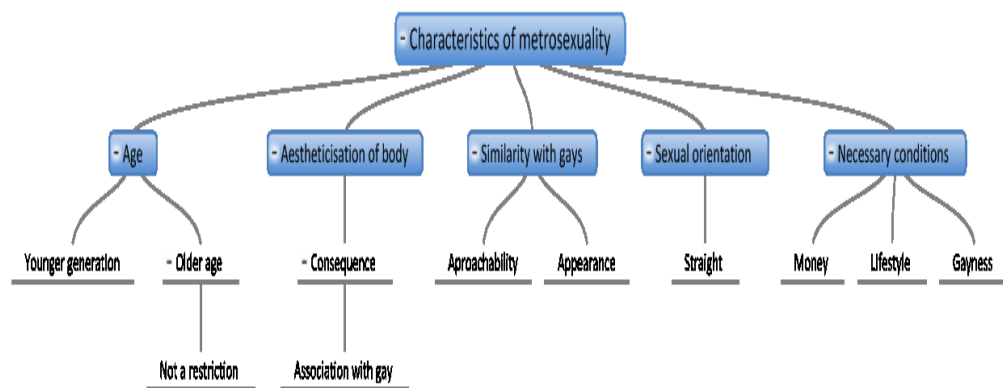
(Ben)

Brian and Ben acknowledge the influence of David Beckham or other footballers on the general perception of masculinity. According to Ben, these men, who form the celebrity culture, combine the traditional way of doing masculinity – by being physically active and strong - and the innovative way of doing masculinity that first manifests in different approach to grooming. These contradicting values are being embraced and practiced by the ordinary men in order to become as popular and successful as their imitated role models.

The idol of fashion, David Beckham, is also often closely linked to *metrosexuality*. In the interviews, this famous football star emerges as the promoter of metrosexuality due to his *lifestyle, financial status and attention to his physical appearance*. All the three attributes mentioned play the role of micro conditions or the necessary requisites for the metrosexual to possess. According to William, David Beckham, representing metrosexual male identity, appeals to both men and women because he manages perfectly to play the roles of the husband, father and a man who cares about his physical appearance:

*And I think that came about through that, and David Beckham is a typical example of somebody that could be considered metrosexual. Because he does, he appeals to women and men equally and he is certainly a role model in so many ways.*

The concept of *metrosexuality* emerged during the interview with Michael and was further explored with William and Andrew. If Michael and Andrew were able to comment only on the appearance aspect of the metrosexual, William provided more in-depth information concerning the conditions (money, lifestyle and gayness) of this phenomenon and its characteristics (age, interest in body aestheticization, sexual orientation and similarity with gay people) (see Figure 5.11).



**Figure 5.11:** Characteristics of metrosexuality

Data analysis revealed contradicting information regarding the age of the metrosexual. Michael and Andrew argued that metrosexuality is more common among the younger generation of consumers, while William disproved this statement by emphasising that the demographical factor of age does not have to be strictly defined as the metrosexual can be of all ages (see also Figure 5.11):

*Probably these men who ... I don't know, preen themselves and shave their chest and legs and stuff, I don't know. You see these young blokes getting their eyebrows done. That's how I see them as.*

(Michael)

*They are all very well groomed and they are a lot younger, so they are like twenty, between twenty and probably thirty. And that's normal to them, because they are a younger generation. Whereas it's normal to take pride in their appearance. So I think in terms of an age for metrosexual – well it's a bit older, it's about thirty, thirty five. So people who haven't been brought up with it, so it's not the norm, but people who tried to adjust to it later in life, if that makes sense.*

(Andrew)



*[Age] It's not a barrier anymore. I don't think it is. I don't think it's a barrier anymore. Well, the concept has been around long enough, I think, for it to be embedded into people's psyche.*

(William)

This controversy only makes the concept of *metrosexuality* more valid, given that it is conceptually rich, as it possesses different dimensions of the age property. On the other hand, such diversity of opinions shows the evolution of the concept since the mid-nineties when it was coined by Mark Simpson (1994), placing the emphasis on the young age of the metrosexual. However, today, as William states, *metrosexuality* can be practiced even by older male consumers. This suggests that this social phenomenon is increasingly accepted as a relevant and socially constructed form of masculinity even in millennial British society.

#### **5.6.1.2 Reality TV shows**

Participants from reality TV shows can equally inspire certain groups of society. Reality show contestants contribute by influencing the tastes of the mass audience. The “Geordie Shore” emerged from the data gathered as one of the programmes that attract the attention of young male consumers, who unconsciously imitate the behaviour observed. Steven and William highlight the impact of the Reality TV shows on the behaviour of male consumers:

*I would say that for the younger generation, not so much for the older, but for the younger generation there is more with the social media and TV and reality TV, what they perceive to be reality, it's important, but I think again it's an age thing isn't it. You become more comfortable in your skin as you get older and you know really what you want, where the younger generation they are easily led on, a bit like sheep: they just follow all in a pack and presumably with the Reality TV shows say, “You do this” and you go out and do it. I think that's one thing – this current generation – it's important to them, because it's everywhere, it's advertised everywhere.*

(Steven)

*Men are doing manicures, pedicures, tanning, moisturising and ... they do on “Geordie Shore”. And they do waxing as well. Or they put, say, “Veet”, the hair remover on the programme. So you see men doing things like that, so obviously it's gonna rub off. And for younger people, younger men, it's a source of influence, because it's about how you make sure you look your best.*

(William)

The example provided by Steven and William refer more specifically to the younger generation of men. According to the research participants, this group of consumers is more susceptible to the new trends in grooming and is motivated by the Reality show contestants. However, in the view of Andrea, all personalities that appear on TV influence society. In this list he includes the previously mentioned David Beckham, Reality shows and the “X Factor”. The participants appearing in these programmes construct a new perception of masculinity – self-attentive and caring about one’s image:

*I think that partly could be some role models have played an influence, these people. So I would say that, for example, in the UK if you look at David Beckham, for example. David Beckham is somebody that takes care a lot of his appearance. He would not say that he is a traditional English person. So let’s say, him and other people like him – they are probably very influential, very influential among certain parts of the society but also people on TV who go to shows, reality shows – oh not reality show, like [thinking] ... “X Factor”. They take care a lot of their appearance, they have their style, they dress in a specific way. I think it’s not marketing, it’s more .... it’s these role models who – because they have a lot of money to spend, they decided to take care a lot of their image because they are often on TV, they are often under the public scrutiny and I think they are an influential part of the society. But then the other part of society ... I don’t know, honestly, I’ve never thought what’s the reason ... Role models who are associated with masculinity, success...*

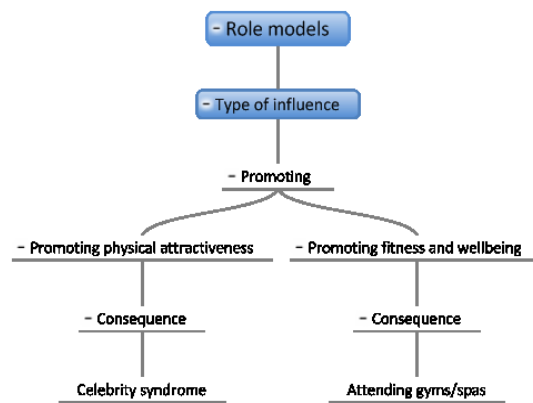
(Andrea)

The level of influence that comes from the *role models* presented in the media is admittedly strong. According to the interviewees, especially younger men easily adopt such practices in their routines in order to get closer to the new standard of masculinity that promotes both the traditional masculine values and the new ones. Although the excerpts reveal that older generation is less keen on experimenting with their physical images since *body aestheticization* practices are more apparent among the younger men, yet the older generation of male consumers are not totally indifferent to how they look. This will be revealed in the following subsections of this chapter.

### **5.6.2 Types of influence of role models**

The analysis of the data gathered indicates that the *role models* from *the media* promote certain social behaviour within society. They are categorised below under the subheading *type of influence*, as *promoting influence*, which shapes the actions of the

male consumer market. The two properties of the concept *promoting influence* are graphically listed in Figure 5.12.



**Figure 5.12:** Dimensions of promoting influence

### 5.5.2.1 Promoting physical attractiveness

As Figure 5.12 above shows, the first dimension of the concept “*promoting influence*” emphasises the aesthetical aspect of the body, consequently, encouraging men to pay more attention to their physical looks. The role played by *celebrity syndrome* is one of the consequences in this new theory, and it derives from the active desire and actions taken to improve one’s physical attractiveness (see Figure 5.12 above). *The mass media* create an environment, within which individuals are encouraged to be more self-conscious in terms of how they look and, as a result of this, set up a trend among consumers to construct their body images according to the examples projected in *the media*. This trend has been named “*celebrity syndrome*”.

#### Celebrity syndrome

It has been noticed that intensive grooming or *body aestheticization*, promoted by *the mass media*, creates a *syndrome of celebrity* within society, and this in particular concerns the younger generation of consumers. By following the practices or images of role models illustrated through advertising in the *mass media*, younger male consumers develop a strong sense of consciousness in their physical appearance. They aim to maintain their physical looks to a high standard, and this need for physical attractiveness develops into the *syndrome of celebrity*. William and Ben support this view:

*I remember him [nephew] saying to me – well you have got social media now as well which place a heavy influence. When Facebook came about and the preponderance of it now, I know it's losing ground at the minute, but I do remember things like, well that was instant celebrity, isn't it. Its instant celebrity: so you put the best picture of yourself on Facebook and you have got to look your best. You pick and choose which picture, which photographs you put on Facebook to make sure you look your best. So your mates and your friends and your family will go "Oh, you look good there" or "You look shit there" or whatever. You say "Take that picture off"! I think that's a heavy influence.*

(William)

*Yeah, I think you do because every glossy magazine, you open up and there is an advert for some products whether it's L'Oreal or you know there is always some product out there that people are promoting and generally it's a celebrity, who is promoting. So what happens is people look at the magazine and think, "We want skin like that. What product do they use? Oh, we will go and buy it!"*

(Ben)

The following examples include diverging opinions. For example, according to Andrew, the trend to look immaculate like celebrities is disappearing, while Samuel thinks that famous people have always inspired society to follow their depicted standards of physical beauty:

*Personally, not as much anymore only because we have got the knowledge of it, so I think if I have picked up a copy of a Heat magazine or like a fashion or a celebrity gossip magazine, I would know if they've posed for a photoshop, photo shoot sorry, if their pictures have been photoshopped and that's not what they actually look like. They would get their clothes provided by a company and I think that's become – I think people recognise that now. Especially in magazines such as Cosmopolitan, they do features for girls and guys wearing no make-up and this is what I look like. So I think that kind of stopped that almost. I think celebrities almost stopped doing that themselves as well. Like they may try to promote as well that they are not perfect. I think that stopped in the right direction, so I think the celebrity state was quite glitz and glamour ten years ago and now it's almost quite normal. So I think it has stopped a little bit in my opinion.*

(Andrew)

*... I don't know whether it's radically different to what it used to be. I think people are always have been - if you think about before I was born, Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton stuff. They strongly influence the way the people thought about themselves and people thought "Oh, I wish I looked like that". I don't – that's changed very much really. The images that are available to us are much more often and much more constant. So*

*they maybe, we maybe feel a bit more of an impact but they are also very very variable. So in the 1950s you might have been able to isolate sort of three or four female screen goddess and three or four similar male ... but these days there might be many many more than that.*

(Samuel)

The perspectives gathered allow us to conclude that the syndrome of celebrity is even stronger than it used to be, because of the frequency of the images society is exposed to and because of the growing number of celebrities in view these days. With a strong emphasis on the beauty aspect, attention to physical appearance is not vanishing, but, on the opposite, remains desirable particularly among the younger male population.

This also concerns the interviewed male identities, given that they also follow the path dictated by *the mass media*. They take pride in their appearance, wear designer clothes (Brian, William and Ben) and try to look their best (Robert, Thomas and Ben) by using various cosmetic products and beauty services (Andrea, Thomas, William and Ben) and by attending gym and spa sessions afterwards (Scott, Robert, Steven, Thomas, Brian, Samuel and Ben). Despite that many of the men interviewed denied spas or cosmetics as crucial products for enhancing their wellness or physical appearance. The excerpt from the interview with Andrew finalises these thoughts, providing more evidence that men in general are more exposed to immaculate male images and body aestheticisation products in *the mass media* than they have ever been:

*Yeah, probably, I think ... media, yeah magazines, so if I was to read ... so what I was reading yesterday? ... like one of the Sunday magazines from a newspaper, that has like gift ideas for men and that would be something that is quite trendy, quite ... metrosexual. They are trying to advertise moisturisers; shaving equipment and then you'd be like, "Oh, so am I expected to shave every day?" And it's almost yeah, you get pressure from there "Oh yeah, I should! That's what is normal, that's what is cool nowadays", I suppose. So yeah, I think it's done very cleverly. I think it works, it does work. So yeah, even if you don't think directly you've been persuaded by media, you are. So even adverts, there is a lot more male grooming products on TV now: electronic razors, aftershaves and in male department store, like Top Man, they're all advertised regularly now, which maybe ten years ago they wouldn't be.*

The excerpts from the interviews with spa users provide the evidence of media's impact on changing perceptions of masculinity. Men acknowledge that media enforces the need for men to create an attractive body image that becomes an instrument in achieving social success. Men from all social backgrounds report this influence on

constructing a beautiful self. No matter what age or social status the men interviewed are currently in, they all want to look their best. This was only less evident in John and Michael's case. John is retired and does not change his grooming despite the growing culture of celebrity. Michael, who is two decades younger, also strongly denies the presence of role models in his life or being influenced by the mass media:

*I never ever, ever bought anything or looked in an advert and bought it.*

According to Michael, it is self-pressure that makes men be more self-attentive:

*I think a person can put pressure on themselves depending on what environment they are in. If they are looking for a girlfriend, if they are pressuring themselves how they look or some men - that is completely and utterly down to the individual I would put! So if you want to look good – fine, if you don't want to look good – don't care. Do whatever you want. Some people care, some people don't. I think it's down to the individuals as well. Generally, if you'd ask me my general opinion, I would say no! But I might be wrong. Depends on the age group, I suppose.*

Michael wants to be himself and makes a purchasing decision independently without media's influence. In this way, he rejects being influenced on how to look after his body. Yet, in the interview Michael mentions younger men are being less resistant to the media's impact towards grooming but admits another type of media's influence that will be discussed in the subsection that follows.

#### **5.6.2.2 Promoting fitness and wellbeing**

*Physical attractiveness* is not the sole trait that *the mass media* promotes in contemporary society. The analysis of semi-structured interviews reveals that media channels also encourage men to be more health aware and concerned with their fitness and wellbeing. Michael provides evidence of this:

*I think people's perceptions of keeping fit have been awakened by certain campaigns and obviously television: "stop smoking", "stop drinking", "get fit" and stuff like that. So yeah, I think there is more to it, I've noticed.*

Michael and other male spa users respond to this media influence. They show a tendency to lead a healthy lifestyle and achieve a better physical state by attending gyms and by relaxing in spas afterwards. The statements of Scott and Ben are the evidence of this trend:

*To keep fit, I think. I love to go to a gym and just to relax in the day as well really. It's nice to get into a sauna, steam room, swimming pool and stuff. Yeah.*

(Scott)

*I think I've used, predominantly used spas. I've used them for both reasons. One to sort of relax, I think, and to get treatments, I think. And the other is because I used to go to the gym, which was a big spa. So the gym was there and I also used a spa periodically, I suppose.*

(Ben)

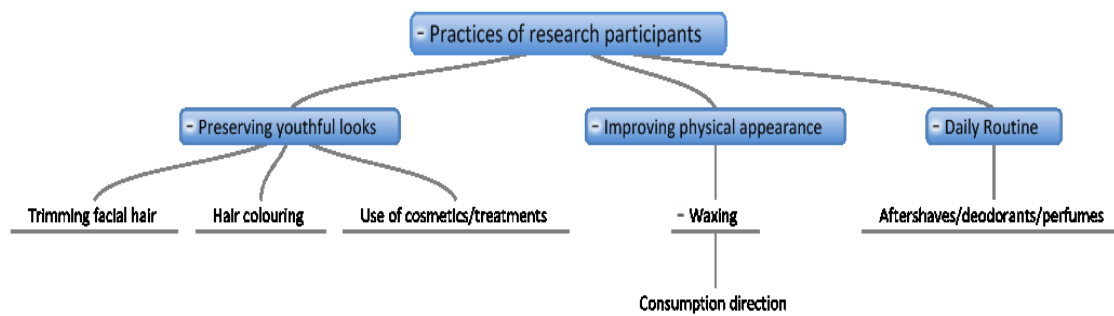
The participants of the study affirm that the *mass media* lay a considerable emphasis on the aesthetic body cult and encourage the male market segment to increase their involvement in grooming practices as well as fitness regimes. The phenomenon of self-attention or *body aestheticization* is observed in the overall male consumer market, including the research participants. Although the majority of those interviewed were mature and presumably might have already developed a stronger resistance to *the media* or any other social influences, they were not completely indifferent to their physical appearance. The male research participants spoke about their own and other men's consuming habits in relation to grooming, hence the property "*increased grooming practices*" has been dimensionally divided into the practices of *research participants* and the practices that *other men* engage in. The latter information will be based on the observation of the interviewed men. It means that all the activities of other men that will be presented in section 5.6.4 are based on what the male participants have noticed in their social environment. The grooming practices of research participants are discussed next.

### **5.6.3 Grooming practices of research participants**

The growing concern with one's body image explains why men increasingly use modern British spas and gyms in order to improve their physical appearance, health and wellbeing. Consuming spa services at the end of the gym sessions is known to give the desirable result, as this helps men not only look good, but also feel good. More in-depth information regarding the use of spas and gyms will be provided in section 5.8 "By-product".

The increasing concern about one's physical appearance is specifically seen as the result of *media* influence, which encourage male consumers to engage in *body*

*aestheticization* practices. Men are interested in *preserving* their *youthful looks*, *improving* their *physical appearance* and taking care of themselves on a daily basis (see Figure 5.13).



**Figure 5.13:** Grooming practices of research participants

The latter three aspects of the described men's behaviour represent the properties of the interviewed men's practices. Although it is commonly perceived that homosexual men require such services, the heterosexual interviewees do not deny engaging in such consumption. In some ways, it is viewed as a necessity and in other cases it is perceived as a hedonic aspiration for achieving aesthetic satisfaction. Each will be discussed separately in the sections below.

### 5.6.3.1 Practices preserving youthful looks

The property "*preserving youthful looks*" comprises activities related to hair trimming or colouring and eyebrow threading, as well as the use of cosmetics. They are viewed as practices that can provide utilitarian benefits – younger looks or, in general, maintaining a tidy appearance. Brian believes colouring or trimming his grey hair makes him younger:

*Well, yeah, dye just to get rid of some grey [hair] [points at his grey temples]. Obviously you don't need to do that when you are younger but what I do is every time I get my hair cut – cause what I do – I trim my facial hair [eyebrows] so my eyes, because I think facial hair [eyebrows] makes – particularly grey facial hair makes a man look old, like a beard or a moustache.*

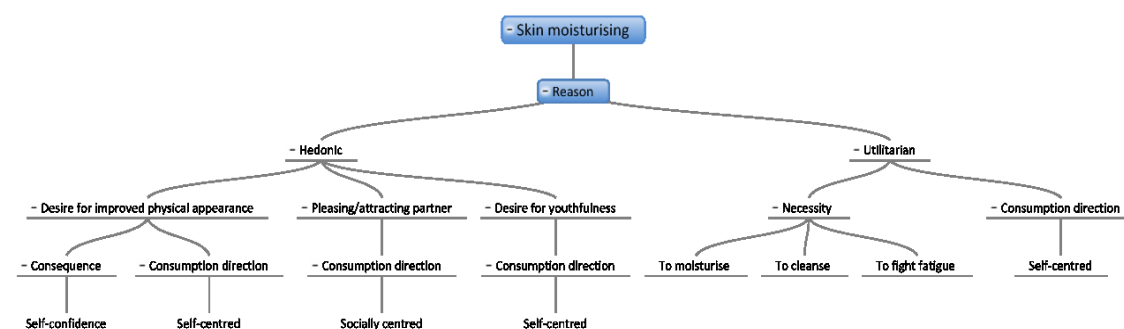
It has been mentioned in subsection 5.5.2.1 that John is indifferent to the new male ideal advertised in the media and would not engage in any explicit grooming practices. Yet, in his view, a haircut and tidying eyebrows are appropriate actions for a man:



*The only thing I would do is I have my hair cut, I have my eyebrows checked for any random, crazy eyebrows ... and that is it.*

These grooming practices can be executed either at home or with the help of professionals. Brian does that himself, while John and Andrew are getting their eyebrows done by professionals.

The use of skincare products also emerged in the analysis as practices that can prolong the younger appearance of men. Its overview is presented in Figure 5.14.



**Figure 5.14:** Reasons for skin moisturising

Quite a few men reported using a moisturiser, however not everyone revealed their motives for caring for themselves in this way. For some men, a moisturising cream is a product that can help maintain younger looking skin; therefore, this motive is more seen as a hedonic desire. “The older you get, the younger you want to be”, - says Robert. Brian’s reasons for moisturising are the same:

*I do moisturise cause I’m getting older. So every morning – shower, shave, aftershave and the very last thing I always put on is “Clarins” for men – a moisturising cream. Just to try and fight, the vain fight of trying to stay looking younger. But I do always do that.*

Nevertheless, skincare can be undertaken among men for utilitarian purposes. For example, a motive to use a face cream or an eye cream at home and try a facial treatment at a spa is driven by a practical need to moisturise and cleanse the skin or fight the evidence of a fatigue, as in the case of Andrea:

*but I found that if I don’t [use a moisturiser] in the morning, I can tell later on in the day my skin feels all tight and that sounds awfully ... gay but it’s true. It’s ... No, it’s not gay, it’s just – But my skin does feel tighter if I don’t use a moisturiser in the morning.*

(Brian)

*Just to try it. Because I do have a dry skin and I thought it might help.*

(Ben)

*I feel – my skin feels a lot better. Obviously I never get spots now because I always get treatments on my face but I just I think I feel better mentally as well.*

(Thomas)

*Yeah, because sometimes I am tired so I don't want to look tired and I put to cover the black ... here [touches his eyelids].*

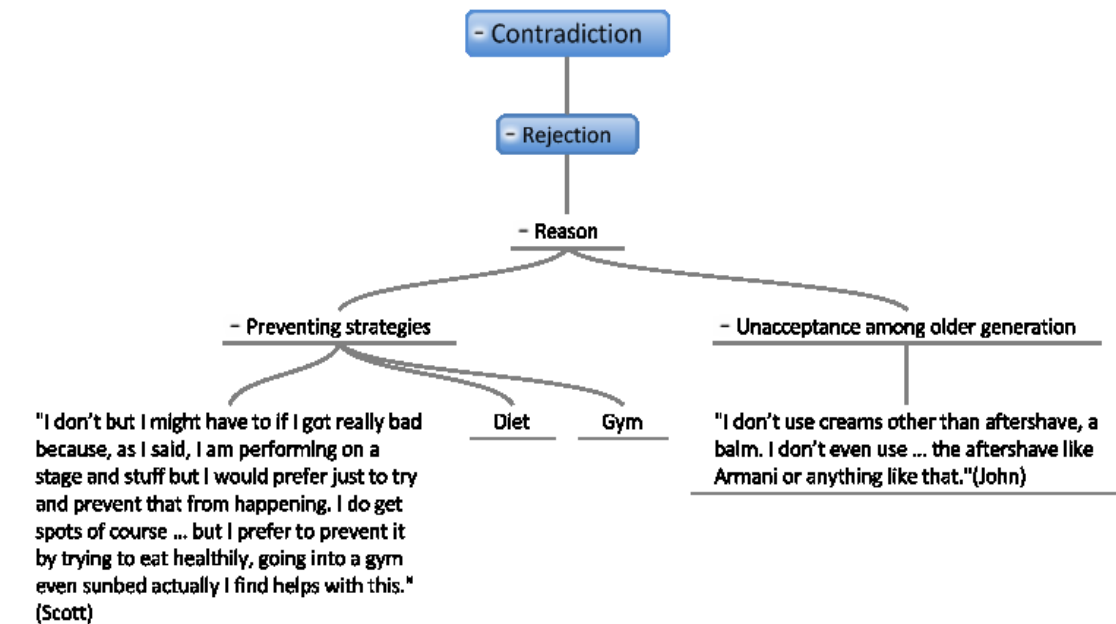
(Andrea)

Yet, for William such practices are more of a hedonic experience, since the use of various cosmetic treatments including face masks, exfoliation and moisturising can help him improve his physical appearance, attract a male partner and at the same time boost his self-confidence:

*There is an added element I think when you are in the relationship that you wanna look good for your partner. I think. I mean if I go – I don't very often go out on the scene looking for other men, but if I do and I am going out, I will make sure I spend at least an hour, an hour and a half getting ready. So I will do the mud mask, I will do the exfoliating, I will do the moisturising, I will make sure my hair looks better than it is at the minute and I will make sure I know what clothes to wear. So there is that element, because you don't know who is out there and I might meet someone... So there is that.*

The feeling that is reached at the end of the grooming process at home or at a spa is what makes this practice hedonic for the *self-centred* and *socially-centred purposes*.

However, not all interviewed male individuals were of the same opinion with regard to the use and benefits of a moisturising cream or cosmetics. John, Scott and Steven take the opposite view. They do not seek to enhance their physical appearance by purchasing cosmetics or getting facials at a spa, but on the contrary, employ alternative strategies to combat ageing for the purpose of improving their physical looks (see Figure 5.15).



**Figure 5.15:** Rejection of cosmetics/treatments

This information contradicts the examples previously discussed of men's use of cosmetics. Nonetheless, it is equally important evidence, which can serve to explain why the majority of men even nowadays seek methods other than aestheticization to enhance their own physical appearance. Their behaviours in relation to the use of spas and cosmetics show that these men are faithful to the values of hegemonic masculinity. As a result, they eliminate beauty and grooming practices from their routines, particularly if they involve cosmetics, since *body aestheticization* goes against the male gender roles.

Instead, they select alternative ways to tackle ageing and increase their physical attractiveness. For Scott, Michael and Steven, a workout at the gym and a diet are the *alternative strategies* that can combat ageing and help enhance their physical appearance and fitness (see also Figure 5.15):

*It would just purely be an exercise regime and a dietary thing. It wouldn't be a like surgical thing at all. Wouldn't go to that extreme.*

(Steven)

*It [exercising at the gym] makes you feel fitter, obviously it keeps you ... there is health benefits of it but also keeps you ... wakes me up*

(Michael)

John finds that cosmetic products and beauty treatments are outside the male comfort zone, particularly if these men belong to the older generation (see Figure 5.15 above). Nevertheless, age is not necessarily the most salient factor for greater acceptance or rejection of aesthetical body practices among men in *the North East* of England. The cited participants (Scott, John and Michael) come from three different generations and yet are equally uninterested in enhancing their physical appearances by purchasing male cosmetic brands or beauty services at a spa. This suggests that perceptions of masculinity are an equally strong force, driving men closer to or further away from the new grooming practices.

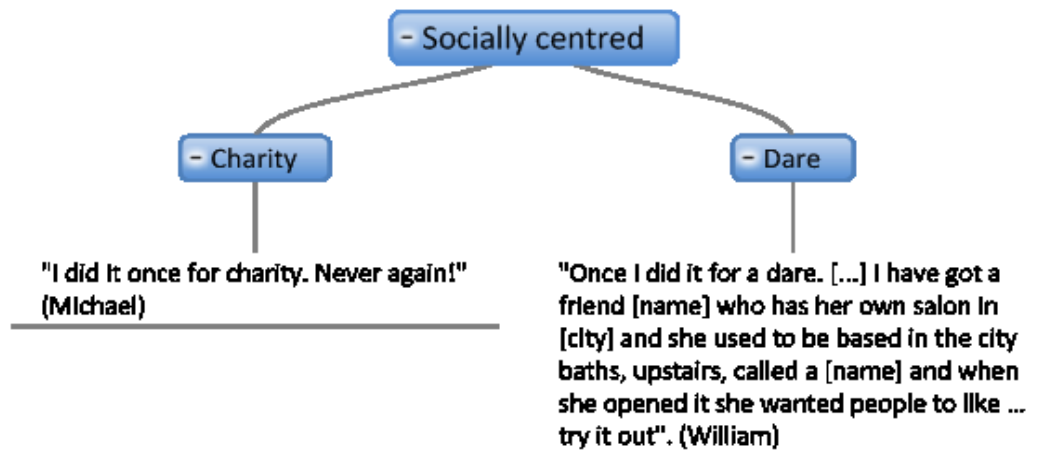
The examples discussed above are the representations of the traditional attitudes of men towards the new male activities. As empirical evidence shows, men who practice traditional gender roles do not embody the new male portrayals depicted in the *mass media*. This reflects that traditional cultural values remain geographically and demographically endemic.

#### **5.6.3.2 Practices improving physical appearance**

Grooming practices can also be undertaken by men for *improving* their *physical appearance* (see Figure 5.13 above on p. 136). For example, men undergo waxing in order to improve their body image and this can have a *self-centred* or *socially-centred purpose*. *Self-centred* consumption of this service is carried out for hedonic needs – to increase self-confidence or because of the need to look better when going on holiday. Brian, who has not waxed himself before was considering undertaking an act of “manscaping” purely for the improvement of his physical appearance:

*Oh, for appearance. Yeah. As far as for appearance when you go on holiday – it's the same reason as ladies – I mean my wife has a bikini wax and that's because she is wearing a bikini and I suppose she is conscious of how she looks. And maybe I'm the same. If put on a pair of shorts to walk down the beach – even when you are fifty six years old – you still wanna think that you look like the guys of the “Bay watch”. [flicks his fingers]. That's the programme. Which you don't but you can fool yourself. So it would purely be for that.*

Conversely, the purchasing of waxing services can be *socially directed*. As the evidence shows, they can be practiced by men for utilitarian purposes to raise money for charity (i.e. Michael) or because of a dare (i.e. William) (see Figure 5.16).



**Figure 5.16:** Socially-centred reasons for waxing services

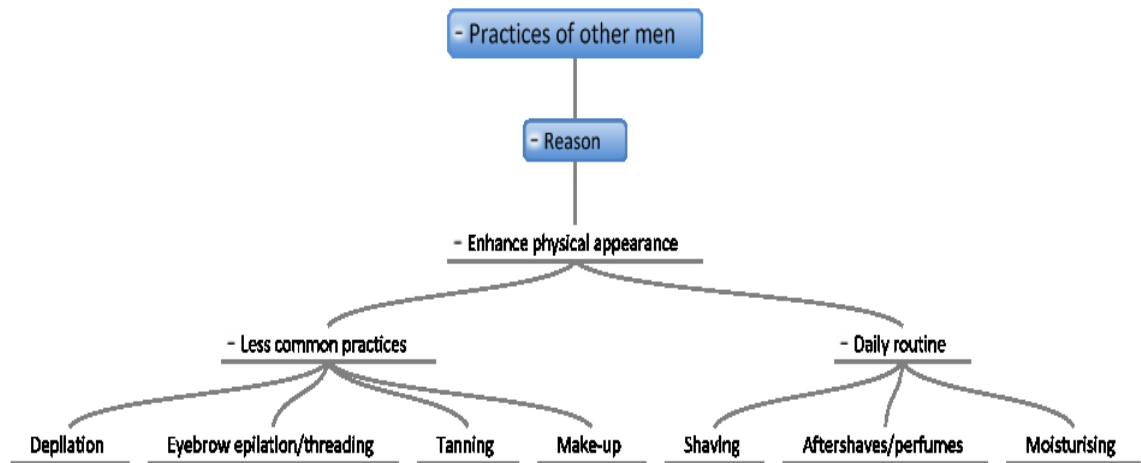
On both occasions, the post purchasing evaluation of service is negative due to physical discomfort, caused by the pain. However, if for a heterosexual man such experience is followed by rejection of the subsequent service, for a homosexual individual physical discomfort does not stop him from repeating the purchase. The latter decision can also bring financial benefits, for example, a discount for the subsequent treatment.

#### 5.6.3.3 Daily routine practices

The third dimension, which belongs to the property *practices of research participants*, involves daily practices (see Figure 5.13 above on p. 137). These include the use of aftershaves, deodorants or perfumes and are identified by men as a necessity, hence, are not alien or contravening the gender norms of consumption. This property contains the least information in comparison to the previously discussed consumption elements. Men were reluctant to talk about their daily practices since they take it as a normal routine used for maintaining cleanliness.

#### 5.6.4 Practices of other men

The subcategory *practices of other men* dimensionally has been divided into present and future practices and, according to the research participants, they are all undertaken for the purpose of enhancing one's physical appearance (see Figure 5.17 below).



**Figure 5.17:** Grooming practices of other men

The first dimension includes information about the men's current grooming activities, observed by the research participants. The spectrum of men's experimentation with their physical looks is wide and it involves two dimensions, namely *daily practices* and *less common practices*, because they contravene the norms of hegemonic masculinity. The *daily practices* of other men are not different from the practices that the men interviewed undertake. It involves shaving, moisturising and the use of aftershave and perfumes. Overall they serve a utilitarian purpose of maintaining general cleanliness. On the other hand, the other group of grooming activities, which are perceived as less common among men, includes beautification practices (i.e. waxing, tanning, depilation, eyebrow epilation/threading and wearing a make-up):

*I have heard of younger men wearing foundation and also this cream, this powder and some younger men do their eyes. Put makeup on their eyes.*

(John)

*Now the young boys of twenty one are getting eyebrows tinted, covered in false tan ...it's a lot, it's changed dramatically since I was like twenty one.*

(Robert)

*So let's say there is an extreme, one extreme is those who, as I said before, they wax, they shave their chest, they do all, they use cosmetics for the eyebrows, they cut their eyebrows, they do all these things and then there is another opposite side, with the man who doesn't care about his ... [physical appearance]*

(Andrea)

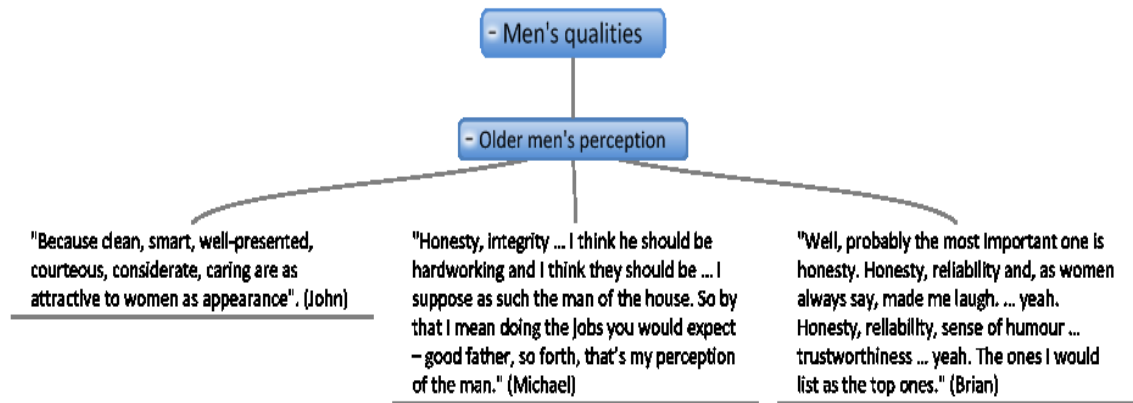
Grooming novelties are particularly well received by the younger generation of consumers; hence this group of men can be classed as innovators or early adopters. These two terms are used in the marketing literature to describe consumers who are considered as the first or second in line to adopt newly promoted styles, services and products, due to high susceptibility to new ideas and products.

The excerpts from the interviews provide evidence that *body aestheticization* practices adopted by younger male consumers are promoted by *the media*, specifically, the Reality TV shows. This source of *the media* has been found to be particularly popular among the young male market segment. The condition, which determines the younger consumers' greater adaptability and their desire to imitate the behaviour of *role models*, is age:

*I think it is fair to say, that we are more malleable when we are younger. It's harder to – I mean, I think when it comes to the self, about appearances; we are more malleable when we were younger. Even so, we still make choices about what we wear in line of what we think men should look like. I just see that there will be intergenerational differences and I think that it's probably younger generations are maybe more amenable.*

(John)

As participants explained, practices for aesthetical body improvement are undertaken for hedonic reasons. Men engage in grooming for the purposes of attracting the attention of the opposite sex, thus, the direction of consumption is more *socially-orientated*. Although young men run the risk of being stigmatised for looking or behaving like a gay, they see grooming as a necessity for them to be successful among females. If for the older generation of men inner male qualities were and remain more valued than physical appearance, for the young male consumers this appears to be losing ground, as they mainly focus on constructing their identities with immaculate physical looks rather than good manners (see Figure 5.18 and an excerpt below):



**Figure 5.18:** Older men's perceptions of men's qualities

*Yes, it is, the male is grooming because he wants to hook a female. So he is not grooming for his own sake – he is grooming because he wants to go out with a female, he wants to be successful with a female. There is no other reason.*

(Andrea)

The emphasis on acquiring immaculate physical looks to win the attention of women shows the changing priorities in men's values. These changes are evoked by the messages that the male consumer market receives from various *media* channels. Its impact on men's behaviour can be of a conflicting nature particularly for those male consumers, who adhere to the classical school of thought in relation to men's self-care. Nonetheless, even those men, who accept and welcome all the changes in social developments including consumption, come across a rather hostile attitude from *close* or more *distant social circles* if they practice the new male gender roles. Hence, the attempt to comply with aforementioned social forces (*sociocultural norms* and the *mass media*) leaves the contemporary men in *dissonance* when deciding how to consume spas and beauty practices particularly in the *North East*.

## 5.7 Male spa consumers in dissonance

A category, *male spa consumers in dissonance*, was verified during the selective stage of theory building. It has emerged during axial coding to unite all the categories that can explain the male spa consumer behaviour (see Appendix L and M). Taking into account the unease that the male spa users experience when making decisions about spa purchasing and consumption, this concept was thought to be the most suitable to



subsume all the categories, related to men's actions in spas and men's general attitude towards the consumption of beauty and wellbeing services.

The concept *male spa consumers in dissonance* has emerged out of the given conditions (*sociocultural norms* and the *mass media*) – the two opposing forces, affecting the consumption decisions of men. As has previously been stated, the external circumstances work in opposing ways, creating dissonance reflected in the actions of the male spa consumers, when they make choices about spa and grooming services. For example, John mentions the strong influence of the *sociocultural norms*, which consequently create tension:

*[...] I would say that we cannot escape the social and cultural conditioning that we grow up in. We grow up in it. We are immersed in it. We don't always even recognise that those influences are at work on us until the some kind of conflict. And then we wonder why we feel the way that we do and it maybe that we want to express ourselves as individuals but are completely constrained by the social and cultural influences that we have grown up with. That's the real tension.*

The psychological discomfort that men experience in *the North East* involves a wide variety of unpleasant emotions, and hence, the adequate actions of the male spa attendees explain why spa and beauty services remain unpopular in this region. Categories that represent an emotional turmoil, which can be seen in the consumption actions of the male spa visitors, are provided in Appendix N and will be separately discussed in the following subsections.

### **5.7.1. Intimidating, uncomfortable and embarrassing**

The male spa users, who took part in this research, revealed feeling *intimidated*, *uncomfortable* and sometimes even *embarrassed* when consuming spas for their leisure and pleasure. This is primarily related to the prevalent perception of a spa space as closely associated with the female gender. For example, for Thomas and Andrew going to a spa can be an intimidating experience, since female clientele is primarily using these places of beauty and wellbeing. This can be an issue not only for someone who is not familiar with this type of activity (i.e. Andrew), but also for someone who frequents the wellbeing places on a regular basis (i.e. Thomas):

*Don't think it's easy. I would be intimidated ... because I wouldn't know what ... I think spa treatments are very ... very, still seen as feminine.*

(Andrew)

*Yeah. Absolutely. I think I would – sometimes you feel a bit intimidated if it's just women because you're a man and it's obviously not really perceived as a manly thing to do. But I'm finding people are – I see a lot more men there and people are looking after themselves more.*

(Thomas)

The feelings of intimidation, intimacy and embarrassment also speak about the problem of *prudishness*. Thomas and Andrew, who categorise themselves as homosexuals, also encounter this type of dissonance during the spa consumption process. William is of the opinion that prudishness is a common trait of the British society:

*But I think that's linked into the whole British thing about being reserved and being prudish and that thing about not feeling comfortable naked in front of other people.*

Andrea, who is heterosexual, is not totally confident in using spas either. He speaks about how visiting spas can be embarrassing:

*It's something intimate, I think. It's intimate ... because you are generally dressed like this and if you are then just with your slip with other men, then it's something different and probably potentially embarrassing. Yeah.*

In the interviews men revealed experiencing psychological discomfort when being semi-naked in front of both women and men. This unpleasant psychological state is not evidently determined by the age, social status or sexual orientation of the person, given that younger and older, married or unmarried, as well as heterosexual or homosexual males found this factor equally uncomfortable.

### **5.7.2 Masking femininity**

Since the wellbeing and beauty industries are regarded as feminine spaces, men employ various strategies to protect their heteronormative status. Some of them mask femininity by using *different wording*, by performing *grooming practices at home* rather

than publicly, by *using spas as by-products* and by completely *rejecting beauty services and products* offered by the businesses of spa and cosmetics:

*So I think that if you said to your friends "Yeah, I just gonna go for a sport massage", that sounds a lot different to "Yeah, I gonna go to a spa and get a spa treatment". So I think it's very ... I think the wording is very important and I think if it was a male spa, which was ... which would take femininity profiles and stereotypical identity away from it, then it would be more encouraging. But at the minute it's still classed as being very feminine.*

(Andrew)

*So I might go and get my eyebrows threaded in the Metrocentre or in Newcastle, whereas a heterosexual male might get it done in the house, their girlfriend might look for their eyebrows out. So we still got the end result but mine has been done in public and his hasn't.*

(Andrew)

*Well the one that I went to – I wouldn't describe as a gendered product. It has gendered services in it. It has the beauty therapy suite, which I never went into. That was a bit of the spa I just never used and they do things like leg waxing and all that. So within it you can separate out. There were some areas which were more not disputed but sort of dance studio space where they were doing tai chi or Pilates. Men like me could go in but we were a bit eccentric, but it was fine. So it was kind of a borderline thing. But then most, the rest of it was very mixed – the pool, the gym, it's just very easy. I don't think, for instance that there was much of the sense of unease either way, for instance, in the gym. Sometimes you get gyms where women feel a bit uncomfortable, women don't like that. This was quite good.*

(Samuel)

### 5.7.3 Secret

Furthermore, revealing a story about one's spa experiences can be problematic due to the prevalent perception in *the North East* that spas cater for the needs of female customers. Consequently, men would often keep their spa visits as a *secret* by *not sharing information with others*, by *choosing certain people to speak with*, would experience *conflict between what information to share* and would carry out *grooming practices at home*:

*[...] – this is a particular friend of mine whom we discussed about going and getting his back waxed. Would discuss that with me and would discuss that with all other friends, but if he went to see a football match in a bar, he wouldn't discuss it openly. If you know what I mean, because it*

*would be a social stigma. Without a doubt. I think probably his behaviour changes and his ... topics of discussion will change depending on the group he is with. So without a doubt I think that's the case.*

(Ben)

*You would never go and get man waxing strips. It was never heard of five years ago but now it's quite common. That's so that is a big change and that's almost ... it's getting towards treatments but in the comfort of your own home, away from the eyes.*

(Andrew)

The dissonance of secrecy in using spas is mainly related to finding the right male confidants. The male research participants did not face this problem when talking with women about the services they tried at spas. The main issue, as the interviewees revealed, is to place trust in other males when disclosing this intimate information.

#### **5.7.4 Unknown territory**

As admitted by research participants, spas are *unknown territory* for the majority of contemporary men in the *North East* and because of that potential new male spa visitors quite often experience *apprehension* and *anxiety*:

*No, I think there is still some apprehension. I think there is still a degree of apprehension, especially for those who haven't been before and they do not know what to expect.*

(William)

*If I invited him to a day fishing, that would be fine. And that may not be greatly about nakedness. It might be more about how alien an environment it is.*

(Samuel)

Both examples speak about men's unfamiliarity with spas and the uncertainty they experience as a result. As Samuel explains, hesitation on the men's side to accept spa services as their leisure practices is very much related to unfamiliarity of the space rather than *prudishness* of the male customers.

### 5.7.5. Conflict between individual preferences and sociocultural norms

This subtheme of *dissonance* brings the discussion back to the issue of the strong influence exerted by the *sociocultural* environment, in which any digression from one's own gender normativity can create *dissonance* or *conflict* when constructing one's masculine identities whenever cosmetic and spas services are involved in consumption process. Dealing with differences between one's own preferences and *sociocultural* expectations can be distressing for men:

*When I was younger, I definitely tried to sort of mask ... that side of me where I have enjoyed those sort of things. Because I think men have to, if you want to fit in. Whereas now I have got no concern about fitting in and if people don't like me, I don't really care. But I think when you are younger, you feel like you have to fit in or else you gonna have, you gonna be sort of, you gonna have a stigma attached to you. Like I say, now if somebody attaches a stigma, oh, well it's their choice, so it's not my problem. I think there is a pressure on younger people. They feel they have to fit in to certain parts or society. And I think as a person that time you do feel sort of tussle between what you actually want to do and what you feel what you have to do.*

(Ben)

*So yes ... social conditioning does affect the way we behave. I can't avoid it. There are things that I can't do because of the way I have been brought up. I could not wear jewellery. I couldn't put an earring, I couldn't wear a gold necklace, because other people that know me would think "What's happening with him?" They would think I was acting strangely and some of my friends would make fun of me. Even if I thought "Well, maybe if I do have an earring or maybe if I do wear jewellery, I'll look more modern, I'll look cool or something. People that have known me for decades would think "Well, what are you doing that for, [participant's name]?"*

(John)

Ben's story reveals how he felt in the past when his way of constructing his masculinity was contradicting gender norms. By realising this mismatch between his own preferences and the settled heteronormative expectations against which both men and women have been constantly judged, Ben realised the best way of tackling this problem was to mask his behaviour by complying with the sociocultural norms.

Similarly, John speaks about the same issues. According to him, people construct their gender based on the social and cultural conditions that accept the behaviour that is in line with their sex category and gender stereotypes. Therefore, in search of peace, as

excerpts indicate, men either conform to the requirements of the gender roles or choose to hide their preferences in order to win back their heteronormativity.

### 5.7.6 Concern about possible attitude

The reluctance to accept spas by male spa consumers can also be related to their *concern about the possible attitude* held by other males. Men's intentions to go to spas even for health and wellbeing reasons can provoke a surprise, teasing or remarks about the probable homosexuality from *close* and *distant social circles* of males. If a heterosexual man fears being perceived as a gay, a homosexual individual is concerned about not projecting false intentions:

*Yeah, the idea or the notion of somebody going to a spa. I think they would think might be ... might be an issue rather than being prudish. I think. Yeah, I think it's more the theory of what people might think rather than they themselves being inherently prudish or kind of thinking.*

(Ben)

*– for me it's not about how I would be considered in terms of my sexual orientation. For me, it's more an issue of my intention because if I am going into a spa or a sauna on my own, I think people presume that you are only there for one reason and for me – I've never had sex in a sauna, in a bath or anywhere. For me, it just wouldn't feel comfortable.*

(William)

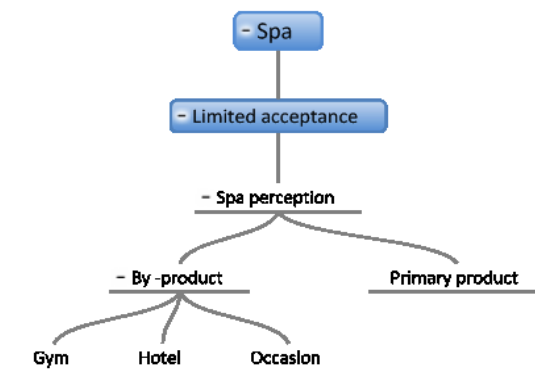
The analysis of the data gathered showed that unpleasant feelings or the psychological imbalance can be experienced by men not only during the process of consumption in spas, but also when considering going to the places of wellness or during the post-purchasing stage of services or products of beauty and wellbeing.

Men's stories provided in this subsection of the chapter explain why a majority of the participants, who took part in this study, as well as male customers in general, reluctantly accept available spa services, particularly if a beauty aspect is included in this process. This happens due to the incongruous influence of external circumstances, discussed previously, and the *dissonance* developed out of that discrepancy. The internal inconsistency created by the socially ambiguous climate reveals why men from *the North East* treat spas as *by-products* of other more prioritised purchases. This insight will be discussed in section 5.8. Limited acceptance of spa.

## 5.8 Limited acceptance of spa

### 5.8.1 By-product

The concept *by-product* has already emerged during the open coding stage. It was mentioned by the very first interviewee and its relevance was acknowledged in the interviews that followed after. In the proposed theory of *social pressure*, this category represents an action/interaction, which follows the described situation, related to men's attitude and consumption of available spa services. For male consumers, who come from *the North East* of UK, or reside or travel in this part of the country, a spa is a product that enjoys *limited acceptance*. *Limited acceptance* is a subcategory that describes male spa consumer behaviour and their perceptions of a spa business. It is divided further into two properties – a *by-product* and a *primary product* (see Figure 5.19).

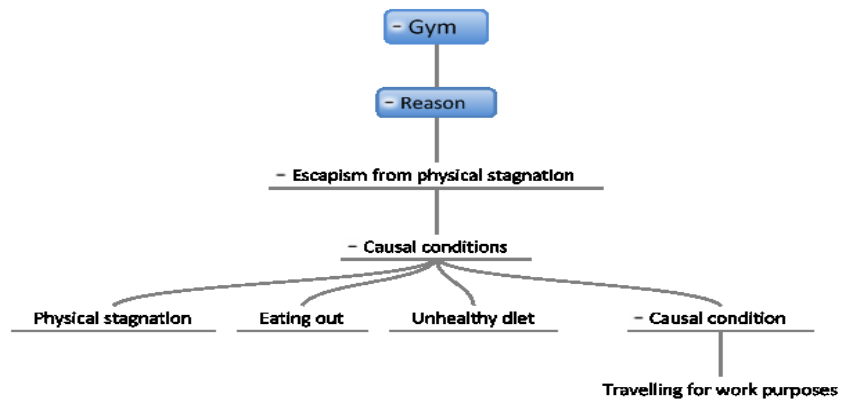


**Figure 5.19:** Limited acceptance of spas

The subcategory *by-product* consists of three properties – gym, hotel and occasion. The mentioned properties are the primary reasons of men's decision to come to a spa. Each of them is separately outlined in subsections 5.8.1.1, 5.8.1.2 and 5.8.1.3.

#### 5.8.1.1 By-product of the gym

The men's shared experiences of using spas in the UK reveal a spa being a *by-product* of two primary purchases - a gym membership and a stay at a hotel. In the first case, the gym users come for a workout, driven by a desire to *escape from physical stagnation*, and for this reason seek to be fit and healthy. Conditions, which push men to achieve a desirable level of fitness and wellness, are *physical stagnation*, the habit or forced necessity of *eating out* and an *unhealthy diet* (see Figure 5.20).



**Figure 5.20:** Conditions for gym use

A single factor mentioned, or a mixture of them, becomes a reason, encouraging men to attend gyms where spas services are often consumed afterwards. The contextual conditions arise due to a personal choice or because of the necessity to travel for work reasons, due to which exercising and healthy eating are hardly possible:

*... For me personally, it's my view, my opinion... I mean if you – once you've been, you do a bit of exercise, you have a sauna or a swim, I personally feel a lot better for it as opposed to sitting in a house ... watching telly before work. I'd rather do something a bit productive and feel a bit better for it.*

(Robert)

*We quite often play in really small towns you haven't heard of, they just have a theatre and nowhere is open after six pm in the evening and stuff. It's not easy to eat healthily when it's like this.*

(Scott)

The result of striving to be fit and healthy is an *improved physical appearance*, which is achieved by building a lean and fit masculine physique. The purpose of this strategy is both dimensionally *self-centred* and *socially-centred* and is usually exercised *monosocially*. Participants talk about the importance of having the right shape, since attaining the desirable body image contributes towards achieving mental and physical stability and a better evaluation of the self:

*Just need to feel good about yourself, mentally as well as well as physically. That's why you go to the gym, trying to get yourself a better body, to become more appealing to the opposite sex.*

(Robert)



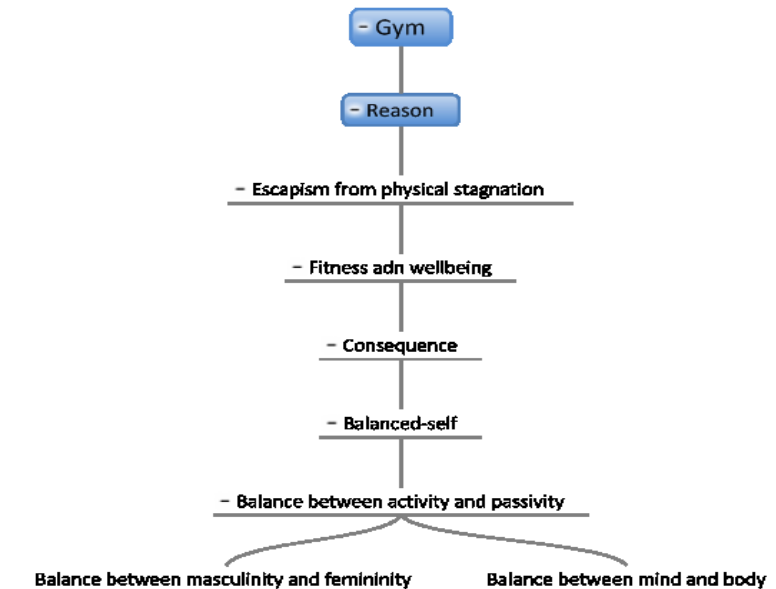
*Because I'm travelling like three or four days per week I'm eating out all the time: I am eating in restaurants so I want obviously look my best in terms of going to the gym but then also because I'm presenting to clients with my job I want to feel my best as well.*

(Thomas)

Nevertheless, *self-confidence* is not the only reason why men seek to possess a lean and fit body type. The excerpts from interviews with Robert and Thomas give an example of both types of consumption – *self-centred* and *socially-centred*. It reveals that men are not only concerned about how to be attractive to themselves, but also equally to the opposite sex and in general to others. By constantly using the facilities of a gym, the male consumers become fit and leaner. As a result of this strategy, they *attract the attention of females* and *achieve social success*. The importance for being attractive to women does not vanish with time, but remains equally relevant in present times, as it was in the past. The age aspect or sexual orientation here do not play a significant influence either, given that physical attractiveness is important for both young and older male individuals, as well as heterosexuals and homosexuals.

### **The balanced-self**

The pursuit of fitness and wellbeing results in the *balanced-self* (see Figure 5.21 below). The inner psychological state of the *balanced-self* is achieved through a combination of active involvement in gym exercises and passive relaxation in a spa afterwards. This strategy has been conceptualised as the *balance between activity* (being active) and *passivity* (being passive), which is then dimensionally divided into further consequences – *balance between masculinity* and *femininity* and a *balance between mind* and *body* (see Figure 5.21).



**Figure 5.21:** Graphical representation of “balanced-self” and its consequences

### **Balance between activity/masculinity and passivity/femininity**

Considering that activity is associated with men (Ricciardelli, Clow and White, 2010) and passivity is related mainly to its female counterpart (Duquin, 1989; Foyster, 1998; Oh and Arditi, 2000), it can be argued that gym users through a mixture of active and passive participation in the gym/spa services achieve a balance between their masculinity and femininity. This theoretical reasoning derives from the evidence in the data gathered. The majority of male research participants explained the term masculinity by giving examples of men’s active participation in various sports, for instance, football, cricket, swimming, golf, etc. and attributed indulgence in spas to the domain of women due to the prevalent *sociocultural norms*. Brian clearly explains these differences:

*I get invited to a lot of corporate golf days, for example, and there always is an understanding – well, the men are gonna go out and play golf and guess what, we’ve also provided the ladies with the spa treatments.*

For men spending time in a spa is a passive activity, hence it is associated with femininity. John describes this comparison:

*It’s — when you go — when I go to a pool or I go to a coast... then the purpose is to swim and to sunbathe, and it’s all out in a very public space. So, I suppose, the difference is if you go to a spa, it’s more intimate. You’re not doing anything, you are not swimming, you just sit in there... and it’s not active, it’s passive ...*

The interviewed gym/spa users by choosing to relax in spas after an intensive workout at the gym find a *balance between activity/masculinity and passivity/femininity*. As the traits of masculinity and femininity can be found to a lesser or larger degree in any individual irrespective of their gender, relaxation in a spa helps men increase their femininity and achieve the status of the *balanced-self*. For a homosexual consumer who shares similar interests with women and therefore exhibits more feminine characteristics and a more feminine behaviour, attending spas takes a primary reason. Yet, they also engage in exercising at the gym to maintain their masculinity. In this way they do their gender well and differently (Mavin and Grandy, 2012, 2013). For a heterosexual male spa consumer, exercising at the gym helps to maintain their masculinity whilst undertaking relaxing spa practices for secondary reasons increase their feminine side. Similarly, they also do their gender well and differently (Mavin and Grandy, 2012, 2013). Mavin and Grandy's (2012, 2013) theory can fit both the homosexual and heterosexual consumer cases and can be combined together with the theory of the balanced-self in order to explain the male spa consumer behaviour in the English spas.

#### **Balance between mind and body**

The second outcome arising out of the process of the *balanced-self* is the *balance between mind and body* (see Figure 5.21 above). This state of the *balanced-self* is again attained by being actively involved at the gym and passively engaged at the spa. If in the first case, the male spa users did their gender both actively and passively and achieved a *balanced-self* by mixing masculine and feminine practices, in the case of the second consequence, a combination of the mentioned activities can lead to finding harmony *between mind and body*. This is again related to the idea that activity is associated with the physical involvement of the body, whereas relaxation is known to calm the mind of the person. This interpretation makes it possible to draw a conclusion, that the consumption of spa services enables male gym users to achieve balance between their physical and psychological wellbeing. Thomas illustrates this theory:

*I think it's very important for me ... inside to feel good and look good.*

Being one of the constant users of spa and gym services, Thomas find them benefiting him in many ways. He speaks about the cleanliness, fitness and the desired psychological status that attendance of spas and gyms give him in return:

*I feel – my skin feels a lot better. Obviously I never get spots now because I always get treatments on my face but I just I think I feel better mentally as well.*

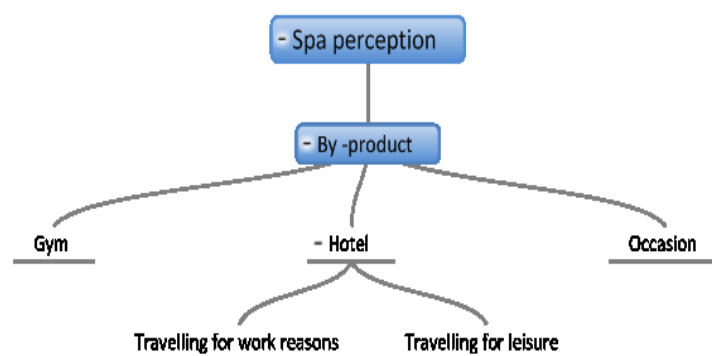
Similarly Ben mentions the same aftereffects for combining gym and spa services afterwards:

*Supplied, the actual location and I think it'd been .. I went with the intention of it would be a fitness thing but then it sort of spun into both because I was able to do the fitness and the recreation in the spa as well. So it sort of hit both.*

By being physically and passively engaged, the male spa attendees find themselves reaping the physical and psychological rewards that manifest in the balance between the body and mind.

### 5.8.1.2 By-product of a hotel stay

Spas are not only used as an additional product of the gyms in *the North East*. The second subcategory of the category *by-product* is a *hotel* (See Figure 5.22). This type of business often contains spa facilities for an additional price or as a free supplement to a room purchase at a hotel. The data gathered reveals men visiting spas during their stay in a hotel for two reasons. The interviewed male spa users attend relaxing spa sessions whilst travelling either for work or leisure purposes (see Figure 5.22).

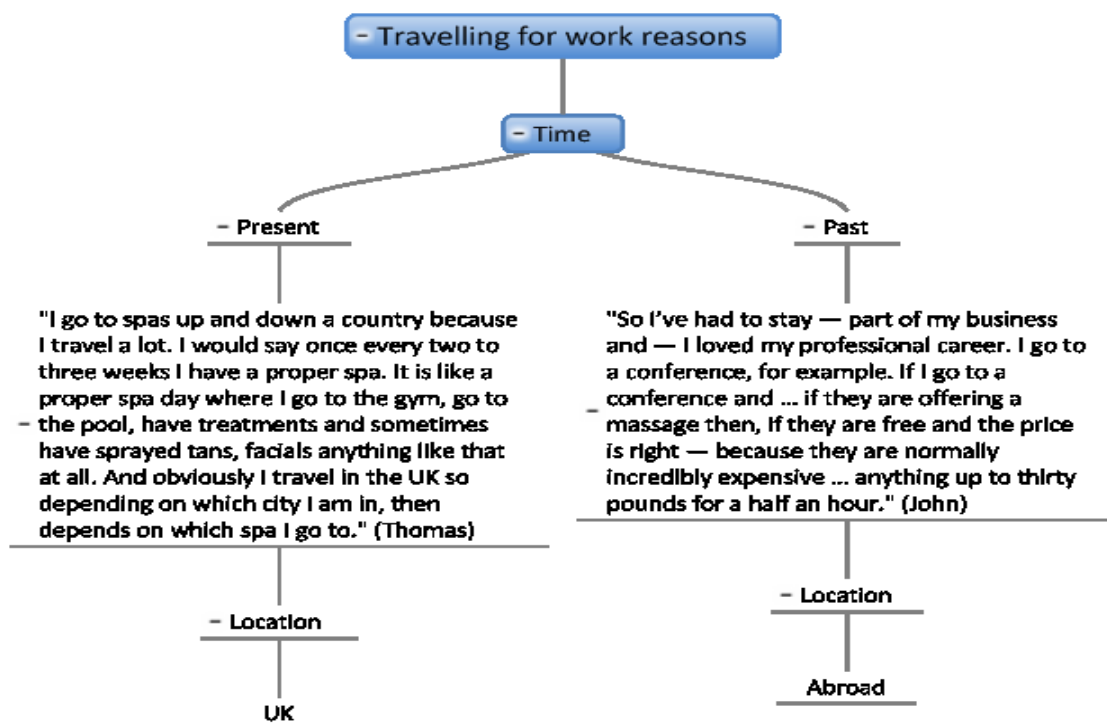


**Figure 5.22:** Subcategories of category “by-product”

### Travelling for work reasons

The property of *travelling for work reasons* (see Figure 5.23 below) only occurs in two cases. Two research participants (John and Thomas) happened to use spa facilities in these circumstances. Nevertheless, this property appears to be conceptually rich. It

consists of two time dimensions – past and present – showing consistency in the behaviours of the male customers in relation to their spa purchases (see Figure 5.23).



**Figure 5.23:** Time dimensions when travelling for work reasons

The male travellers for work purposes seek relaxation at spas for two reasons. The answers gathered during the interviews reveal men wanting to *escape*, first, *from stress* and secondly, *from mundane reality*. This is relevant to both homosexual and heterosexual men. In the first instance, a stressful work environment forces men to seek escapism and achieve a desirable outcome, such as an enhanced wellbeing:

*Just its 'cos my job is really stressful so I really need to relax and just not think about work and just switch off.*

(Thomas)

In contrast, the mundane realities of life, full of responsibilities, force male spa users to seek *escapism* in spas, as this can take them away from work-related duties. Choosing relaxation in contemporary spas after a hard days' work is a reward for all the hard input:

*The circumstances are all geared to this, not sure if pampering is the right word but is all geared to — it is a bit of a treat. So ... yes, you spend a bit*

*of money ...have somebody get into the muscles, it's therapeutic, it's calming, it's relaxing and leaves me this kind of restorative sense.*

(John)

Because the male participants travel or did travel for work reasons alone, their consumption style of spa services is described as a *monosocial* practice. The latter term means that this type of hotel/spa user would consume spa services alone. Nevertheless, it is still classed as a social type of consumption, given that spa experiences occur in a social environment.

### **Travelling for leisure**

The consumption direction of spa services is more socially grounded for those male spa users who combine leisure travelling with spa visits. Although these male spa customers envisage spas as a treat, the latter is not so directly aimed at giving pleasure to one self, as in the case of men who travel for work reasons, but rather for treating their partners. In addition, through pleasurable and indulging in spa experiences this type of traveller improves their relationship with their female partner.

The male spa users while travelling as part of their touristic or holidaying experience have a motive for making their time with their better half more memorable. Wellbeing and beautification services at spas are designed exactly for that reason – to make the couples' time more special. The pairs' experiences in luxurious spas become more distinct and memorable at the same time, because spas are more upscale purchases for special occasions rather than for daily consumption. Spas offer an oasis, where the everyday responsibilities and routine hardships can be forgotten while immersing oneself in the realm of relaxing pleasures. In so doing, a spa as a beauty and wellbeing business is often associated with a place of treats (see Figure 5.24).



**Figure 5.24:** Men's reasons for consuming spa services while travelling for leisure

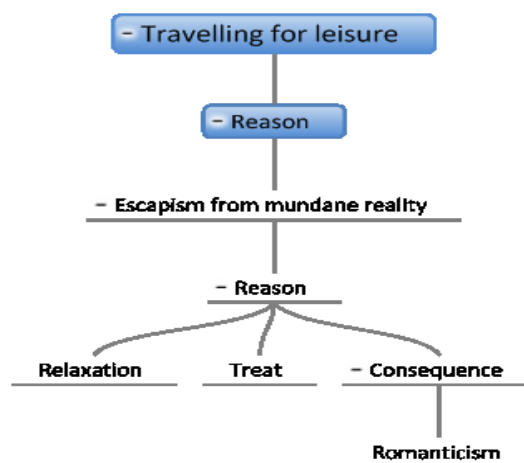
*It's a bit more of a treat, it's a bit more of a special treat particularly. I am taking the last two times where we've actually gone – The last time we went to Liverpool and Leeds. So it meant a little bit more travelling, so it's a bit more special than going to a cinema or going to a theatre, cause it is a longer experience.*

(Steven)

By choosing to consume spas *heterosocially* (with women) during the weekend break or while on vacation, male consumers practice *escapism*. With the purchases of pampering sessions at a spa while travelling, couples *escape from mundane reality* and daily chores and, as a result, experience a closer connection. Routine, family and work responsibilities represent the conditions, which influence men's desire to seek time away with their wives or female partners. Steven gives an example of this type of spa consumption:

*I suppose with the spa – because we have got a family but they are older now – it's generally without the kids and it's generally without any other things to concern ourselves with other than just probably the two of us. That's it. And relaxation, so no other interference.*

According to Ben, social relaxation with a partner leads to the possibility of enriching the couple's relationship on a romantic level (see Figure 5.25 and the excerpt below).



**Figure 5.25:** Consequences of escapism from mundane reality

*It does bring you closer. Yeah. 'Cos it's romantic but also 'cos for those two days away you come together, you know what I mean. You have got no phones, no people around you. It's just the two of you. So I think it's definitely. Yeah, without a doubt.*

The concept of *romanticism* started to emerge during the interview No. 9. It was verified when carrying out the analysis of all interviews at the selective coding stage. This concept plays the role of a consequence in grounded theory terms. The researcher's analytical assumption regarding the romantically improved relationship through consumption of spa services has been confirmed by William and Ben. William has probably the most experience of using spas. He has been fulfilling his hedonic and utilitarian needs in wellbeing places in the North East, across the country and abroad for nearly two decades. Therefore, this interviewee was able to comment on whether spa consumption with a love companion has a positive effect on the relationship:

*Yeah. I think it did, yeah. It just added another element into the relationship. It was something else we have done together and we enjoyed it. And it was fun.*

It appears that for heterosexual so as homosexual men spending time in spas with their partners mean the same - a closer and romantic connection. Therefore, the excerpts provided in this subsection justify the credibility of the concept of *romanticism* as an outcome of using spa facilities *heterosocially* and *homosocially* while travelling for leisure.

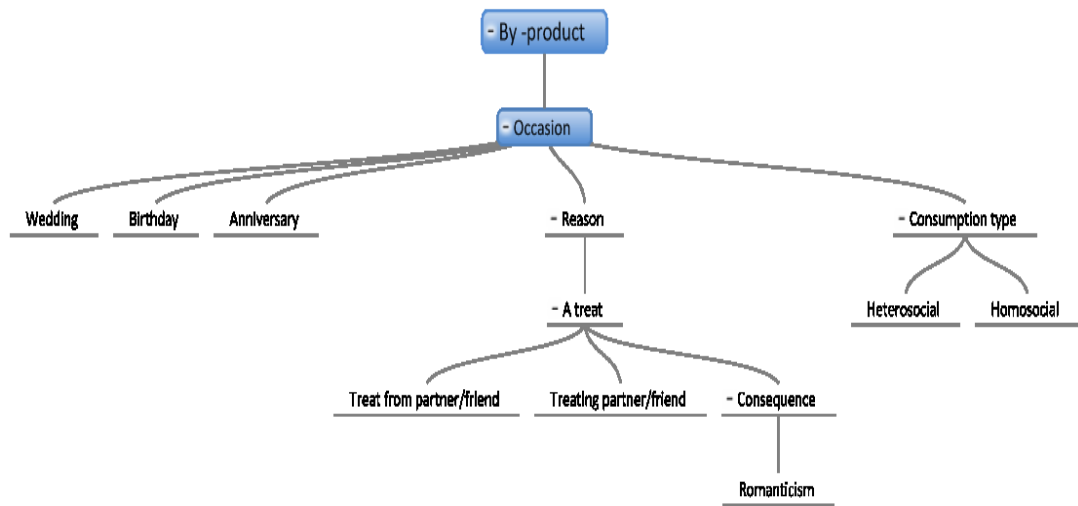
#### **5.8.1.3 By-product of an occasion**

The third subcategory of the category *by-product* is the *occasion* (see Figure 5.25 on p. 160). This concept in the theory of social pressure can explain why wellbeing and beauty services at spas are viewed as complementary products by male spa users in *the North East*. John's thoughts are the best example of this reasoning:

*It's an occasion and underneath that there is all these resources "Hey, fancy, shall I see you down the pool?" You might, I've never said it, but you might say "See you for a sauna later". But that's like a secondary reason, not a primary reason. So I think you might find that it's more socially acceptable as a secondary reason than it is as a primary reason.*

The subcategory *occasion* is divided into three dimensions – wedding, birthday and anniversary – which all signify a type of an occasion (see Figure 5.26 below). These are the occasions, which the interviewed male spa users mentioned when talking about their experiences of using spas in *the North East* or in other parts of the UK:





**Figure 5.26:** Subcategory “occasion” of category “by-product”

John, Steven and William have used spa services for these reasons. The consumption type that emerged has two dimensions – *heterosocial* and *homosocial* (see Figure 5.26 above), with the last example being practiced abroad. Men choose to commemorate special occasions in spas *heterosocially* or even *homosocially*, and can give other people or receive from other people the opportunity to experience it as a birthday treat from both female partners and male friends:

*It's usually a birthday treat or just a relaxation. It's just a special occasion, generally.*

(Steven)

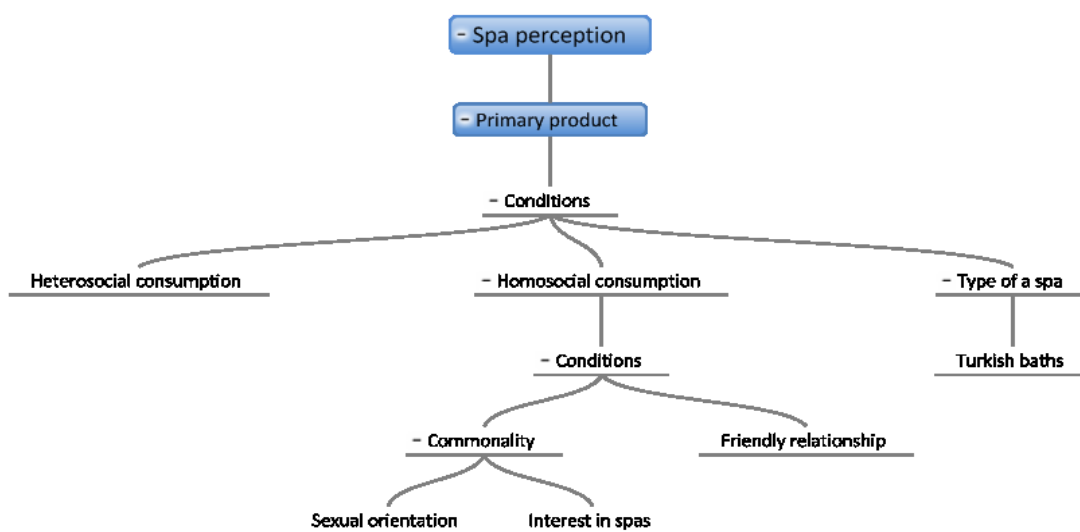
*It was his birthday and he wanted to go to [European city] because he has never been before and then obviously we asked him what he would like to do. [...] And he said he would like to go to a health spa.*

(William)

The interview excerpts show the direction of a treat flowing either to a partner/friend or from a partner/friend. It can also be argued that by spending time together males in heterosocial and homosexual partnerships again have excellent prospects for enhancing their romantic relationships. The justification of the term *romanticism* was yet again achieved at the selective coding stage, first with William and then with Ben, during the validation of the theory developed.

## 5.8.2 Primary product under specific conditions

Spa services can also be perceived and used as *primary products* by men who are from *the North East* or who happen to live or travel in this part of the country. During data collection a few individuals admitted going to a spa because of the health and wellbeing benefits received from using relaxing spa services when seeking an *escape from stress*. John, Andrea, William and Ben appreciate the state of physical and emotional wellbeing after being in a spa; thus, repeat their purchases in order to maintain that sense of tranquillity. However, such an attitude opposes *sociocultural* practices in *the North East* of England, where the perception is strong that a spa is a luxury product designed to meet the hedonic and utilitarian needs of female consumers. This *sociocultural* context determines the way male spa visitors consume spa services for primary reasons in this part of the country. The primary purchasing of relaxing spa services in the beauty and wellbeing venues occur only under specific conditions – the types of social consumption (i.e. *heterosocial consumption*, *homosocial consumption*) and the type of a spa they go to (such as the *Turkish baths*) (see Figure 5.27). These conditions will be discussed in the subsection 5.8.2.1.



**Figure 5.27:** Primary purchasing of spa services

### 5.8.2.1 Types of social consumption

The type of social consumption is defined by the selection of companions with whom a male consumer chooses to have a spa experience. This condition plays a significant role in the male spa user's decisions to purchase beauty and wellbeing services at spas for primary reasons. The gender preference of the spa companion determines

what type of social consumption the male individual is going to employ. The category of *consumption*, as the Figure 5.27 shows, is dimensionally divided into *heterosocial* and *homosocial consumption*. Each of them will be analysed in the below presented subsections.

### **Heterosocial consumption**

*Heterosocial consumption* is defined as consumption where female partners are chosen as confidants for spa experiences:

*I went with my wife and my daughter. And it was because of its reputation. It wasn't cheap. It was about nineteen pounds for a morning. We chose a time whereby couples can go because it's structured so that sometimes it's men only, sometimes it's women only and on a Saturday morning, which is probably the least popular time, [laughs], I imagine, it was couples.*

(John)

*Well sometimes we went as the family and sometimes I just went myself. It depends what we were doing in the day. I think when we first started the kids were a bit too little but certainly they did join in when they got a bit bigger. They could go swimming in the pool and that sort of stuff and they can do their own things and it was a big place. You might do different bits at the same time. They had classes and stuff. So maybe [wife's name] would go and do a tai chi and I would go and do something else. I started off really kind off doing the gym and doing the pool and stuff. After about two or three years I just had given up. What I have noticed I just went to a sauna and just chilled or 'heated' out. And that's quite nice. I got really lazy.*

(Samuel)

*I think it brought us, I think it's quite a, well, it's quite an essential thing I think to have a massage together. And that do, yeah I think, it's quite a romantic thing to do. Without a doubt, yeah I do. Yeah. It's something that we would do together. There was a treat that I just decided to book it and surprise her that we will be going. The idea for us was to get away from the city to go – that was only a half an hour up to Morpeth way. So we went to for two nights and we had a dinner and went to a spa. We just relaxed: we just read books and spend some time together because we very rarely do when we at work. So and part of that experience of gong away in a totally different location spending time together, not outside, cause we spent most of the time together in the spa.*

(Ben)

John, Samuel and Ben had used a spa in the past for primary reasons in the company of their family or the better half. Heterosocial consumption with female family members is employed to experience hedonistic and utilitarian spa pleasures. In the case of John,

this type of consumption of spa services reunites the family and brings its members closer to each other, while for Samuel visiting a spa with the family meant an escape from mundane reality and stress. Similarly Ben reports the relaxing and romantic effects of the trip together to a spa. Simultaneously, these visits were purchased for health and wellbeing reasons.

*Homosociality* is not appreciated by John because of an associated risk with this type of practice. This interviewee is highly concerned about public opinion and for this reason remains loyal to the heterosocial type of consumption by adhering to the cultural values that are exercised among men of his generation:

*Well, I haven't ever been with another man. This could be as a result of the way we have grown up. But I can't think that I would ask another man to go with me and I can't think that another man would ask me to go. We just wouldn't do it.*

The older generation perceives *homosociality* as a legitimate form of consumption only in the context of sport. John and Samuel illustrate this trend:

*I could. I mean especially if we are all in the football team and as part of preparations to continue to play together as a team and we might all decide that will go and have a Turkish bath and a massage and there's safety in numbers [laughs].*

(John)

*So for instance he [brother] plays cricket, he used to play rugby. So in rugby everybody gets naked playing rugby. For start all kind of getting into a big heap in the middle of the pitch and then they go and share a bath afterwards. They used to just literally get into the baths, like big bath - altogether. And that wasn't the problem. So that's not really about nakedness. It's about environment. So that was very masculine, very acceptable environment compared to a spa which would be a bit weird.*

(Samuel)

Yet, in other contexts anything that has to do with intimacy distances men from each other. Modern British spas are included in that spectrum. In the view of men and contemporary society as such they are luxurious products for female indulgence. *Sociocultural norms* and values hold the power to determine consumer preferences, when it comes to choosing available services in the spa market. *Homosociality* has not

gained legitimacy as being an acceptable consumption for heterosexual men and breaking these norms can result in *social stigma*.

John's thoughts reveal that society, in particularly its male side, can socially disapprove of spa consumption among men, for this type of practice is associated with homosexuality. For men who do their gender according to the traditional male gender norms and employ heteronormativity in their actions, inviting a male friend can mean ridicule. John illustrates this:

*Because I see that as a feminine pursuit and not a masculine pursuit. I don't see men pursuing treatments for their nails, for example. I don't see that as something that I need to do and if I did it, I'd expect to be ridiculed by my friends ... if I told them.*

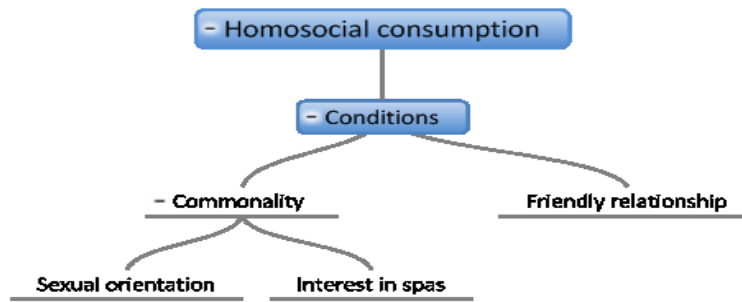
The example provided above about the possible consequences explains the decision of John and Samuel to keep their spa visits a secret or use a different word (i.e. a "gym" instead of a "spa") when talking to male friends about it. Although both men accept spas as a *primary product*, their practices show that such consumption is only exercised under some conditions – by keeping it a *secret* and consuming spa services only *heterosocially*:

*Well, like I say, I think you can go into a spa, but because it is fairly, it's a shut off thing. It happens in its own space, I don't think it would be a problem. If you commuted here, you can go and do what you want in Newcastle and go back to [town]. That wouldn't be a problem. It's only if you allow those behaviours to affect how you behave when you are back home, then it would be a problem.*

(Samuel)

### **Homosocial consumption**

In spite of a strong disapproval of practicing spa visits with male friends, male research participants are open to the suggestion that the *homosocial* type of *consumption* could be practiced even in *the North East*. Minor conditions that determine this possibility are the commonality between the two male friends. Based on the information gathered, this subcategory was divided into two properties. It appears important for men to share the same *sexual orientation* and *interest in spas* before inviting someone for mutual spa pleasures (see Figure 5.28).



**Figure 5.28:** Conditions for homo-social consumption

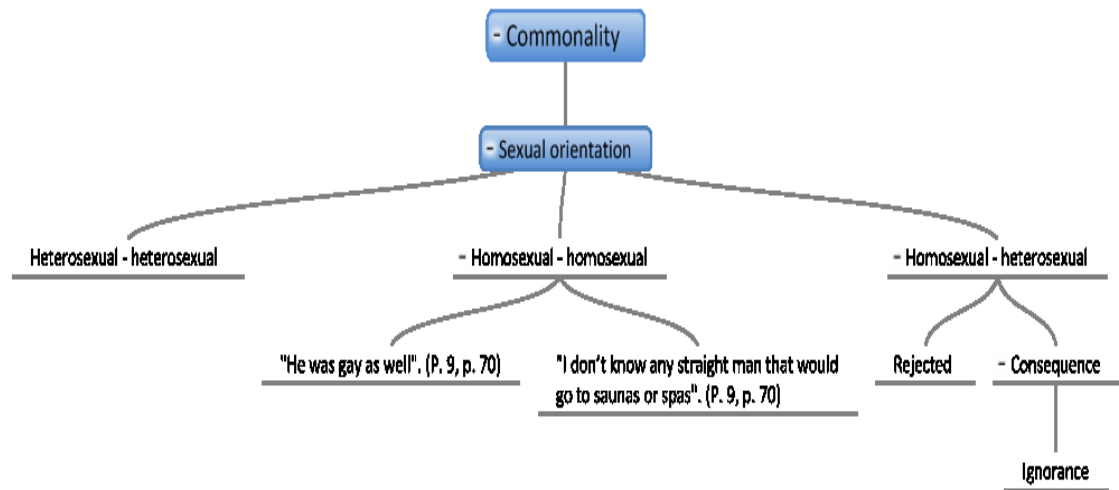
In contrast, *commonality* is not the only factor that affects men's decisions to invite a male friend to the venues of wellness and beauty. Next to the already mentioned minor conditions, a *friendly relationship* with the potential spa companion (see Figure 5.28 above) has been mentioned by male spa consumers. All these factors as conditions are discussed in the following subsections of this chapter.

### **Commonality – sexual orientation**

Andrea is the best example of a spa visitor who can practice a *homosocially* shared spa experience under the aforementioned conditions. This consumer understands the value of the benefits received from using spa services and has experience in visiting spas for primary reasons. Andrea openly expresses his intentions to visit spas in the North of England on a more regular basis for stress relief. However, his desire to find someone to go with is not without a struggle due to the prevalent perception that *homosocially* interactive consumption occurs only among gay consumers:

*... it's just a preconception about – probably he thought that probably just gay people go there. But I don't think. I think a lot of people go there that are not gay.*

Such an assumption thrives on the basis that spas in this part of the country are associated with women, hence, a male consumer, purchasing spa services, crosses the strictly defined gender boundaries. For this reason, he can be assigned to the group of consumers that is often avoided or ignored by the heterosexual men who conform to the traditional gender roles. For a heterosexual man, with the classical perception of masculinity, an allusion to homosexuality can only create social problems, which, as empirical evidence shows, men strive to avoid. The social scenario mentioned explains why men place a significant importance to sexual commonality, when seeking companionship from other males.



**Figure 5.29:** Commonality in sexual orientation

The matching sexual orientation of the two male individuals concerns not only the heterosexual spa consumer. For a homosexual man, like William, inviting a straight male appears to be a probably unachievable task due to a widespread negative attitude:

*I think they would look the other way. If I was having that discussion with a straight friend or a straight work colleague, he would look the other way. Like he didn't wanna be in the conversation. Because I've seen that happen where I had that conversation in a work situation and straight male colleagues looked the other way or suddenly got busy.*

To find a male spa companion is a hardly attainable mission, not only because of the prevalent preference to practice leisure activities with people of the same sexuality. From the perspective of William, it appears that straight men are not interested in going to spas. *"I don't know any straight men that would go to saunas or spas"*, says William. Similarly, Ben reinforces the previously mentioned believe:

*... I don't really know. I think ... I think probably none of my friends would wanna go ... Male friends would wanna go. Probably wouldn't. They don't really like that sort of thing. I mean they just don't. They are not in to it, to be honest. That's not for the intention of not doing it. I would invite them. I just think they wouldn't go. So I haven't. But yeah, that probably would be the only reason why. Not that I am sort of embarrassed about saying I go to a spa because I do. But it's just cause they wouldn't come. So I wouldn't invite them.*

The examples provided by William and Ben reaffirm the influence of the *sociocultural* values on the behaviour of male customers. Based on the data gathered, an assumption prevails in *the North East*, that only gay men can be interested in going to

the contemporary baths. It explains why men reluctantly speak to their friends about their interest in wellbeing and relaxation at spas. Andrea illustrates this tendency:

*So there could be some, I don't know, people probably don't like to go together – males go together to a spa – probably because they may be perceived as gay.*

The fear of having one's sexuality misconstrued makes men put aside the idea of visiting spas *monosocially* or in the company of other men (i.e. *homosocially*). Thus, spas remain exclusively used by the female consumer market even in the twenty-first century North East.

Yet, during the data collection two interviewees admitted employing a monosocial type of consumption. Samuel and John have also visited spas alone. Visiting spas alone for Samuel meant escape from stress (*"So it's kind of felt – I think that time I was relatively stressed with my work so it was good for that"*), while John sought improvement in his health and wellbeing as a way of recovery after a sport injury:

*In a nutshell it's ... it feels good. It makes me just feel relaxed, unwind. I think over the years – I don't seem to have this problem so much now but I've had in the past a bit of back pain as a rugby injury and I know that a massage will not cure the injury but for the period of the massage – I used to take massages in an attempt to ease pain on a systematic basis but now I just do it because – it just leaves me with a sense of ... I don't know, wellbeing ... Yeah, quite hard to articulate but just leaves me with a sense of wellbeing. A whole massage process is an attempt to kind of soothe, manipulate muscles that are tense or knotted or – it's just a way – and also I think that, my understanding is that the oil that's used can sometimes be beneficial. So, for example, one lady told me – this is when I was having on a systematic basis – for example, lavender oil contains some kind of ... analgesic. So it's like when it gets into the blood stream as a kind of pain relief – so that's nice.*

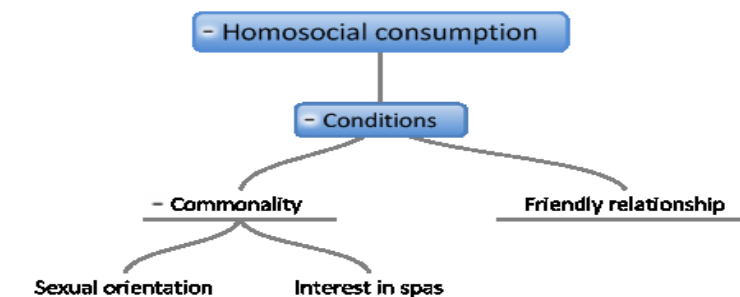
(John)

The excerpts provided suggest that the monosocial type of spa consumption exists among the male consumers. However, it has to be the specific reasons that make men feel comfortable in using spas as a way of spending one's leisure alone. It is a concern over one's health and wellbeing that brings men to the British spas. Therefore, only those men who envisage spas as a form of relaxation and cure can consume spas by themselves.



### Commonality – interest in spas

In search of prospective spa confidants, male spa users need to adhere to the second requirement of communality – *a similar interest* (see Figure 5.30 below).



**Figure 5.30:** Conditions for homosocial consumption

It appears that this condition is an important detail that can make a visit to a spa likely. Following the first unsuccessful attempt, Andrea finds a heterosexual male colleague, who is interested in maintaining his wellbeing by purchasing spa sessions:

*Basically, the male colleague was very ... he is from [foreign country] so he likes these things. They have these things there*

The importance for finding someone with a similar attitude was also expressed by Ben:

*You wouldn't ... you would ... you wouldn't choose somebody who you knew wouldn't be interested in it. I think you would have to – the perception of it is still - I think the perception for many men is that you still wouldn't go ... with another man. You just wouldn't do that. You go on your own or with your partner. You wouldn't go with another man.*

However, from the predominant perspective, *homosociality* is not commonly practiced within the male consumer market in spas. Samuel highlights this:

*Well, depending on the – yeah, depending on, yes. I would be very hesitant to do so, but I mean – I didn't. I don't think I ever have. The only circumstances in which I would do so, I suppose, for instance, when we were the members of this [spa name] thing. If you knew that somebody else was and sometimes I did, I knew somebody from work, I knew that they were a member. If I knew that that person went to that club anyway, I might say to them "Are you going along tonight, I am going along tonight". That would be all it would be. But to organise it for the purpose would be really odd.*

According to him, although homosocial type of consumption could possibly be practiced with someone with a similar interest it would still be considerably uncommon.

### **A friendly relationship**

A *friendly relationship* is the second main condition (see Figure 5.30 above) that must be obeyed when choosing a male spa companion. The examples provided below show that some a degree of familiarity is a necessity before offering the other man the opportunity to practice homosociality in spas. Knowing the person's sexual orientation already shows a fairly close acquaintanceship with the prospective spa-goer, as well as some level of established openness and trust between each other:

*But let's say, I invited the guy from my office because I knew that in his culture they do these things and I invited another person because I know him very well but I wouldn't have told somebody I don't know much, "Let's go to a sauna". I would probably tell him "Let's go for a beer, let's go for a drink, let's go for a ..." but not to go to a sauna. I don't know the reason but it's probably something intimate as well, cause you are semi-naked there. Probably that's the reason.*

(Andrea)

*Well, you know, if you invited probably just to spend a day in a spa, or if ... you are a bloke, it might feel you are inviting them to a kind of sexual experience.*

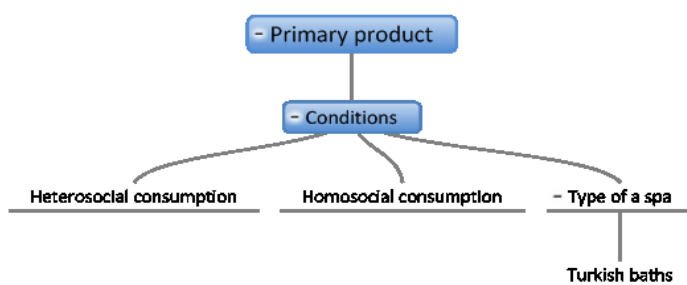
(Samuel)

A friendly relationship is a compulsory condition that cannot be excluded when choosing or inviting a male friend to join visits to spas. If it is ignored, then, as Samuel states, the intentions can be misconceived. Hence, a conclusion can be made from the real life situations of research participants that a spa once again can be acceptable among the male consumer market, however only if specific conditions mentioned above are followed. Although some interviewed men regard the spa as an important activity, which can improve their health and wellbeing, there are imperative facets that cannot be excluded before the activity can take place. These aspects are the discussed conditions, which can make visits to spas possible.

### **Type of a spa**

For a primary visit to a spa to take place, it is important to adhere not only to the aforementioned conditions, such as *commonality* and a *friendly relationship*. The

analysis of the data gathered reveals men's preference for Turkish baths, as a type of spa, particularly suitable for homosocially interactive consumption (see Figure 5.31).



**Figure 5.31:** Location – condition of primary consumption

There is a tendency among male spa consumers, who go to spas for primary reasons, to select *Turkish baths* for relaxation and other health related benefits. This type of a spa is known for a considerable amount of space to host many visitors at a time. William reports that, like most other men, he prefers this type of a spa for the improvement of his wellbeing:

*I think quite a few guys that go to the Turkish baths were purely going for the health benefits. They are regular, they go every week, you could guarantee if you went at the certain time on the certain day, you could see the same people. And in some respects I think there was, there is a social element to this as well, because men invariably, there is sort of, there is .... There is a room in the Turkish baths where you could just sit and, though it is a dry heat, it is not unbearably dry hot. But you could sit with the newspaper or you could sit and chat with somebody else and quite a few guys did that in between going in and out of different rooms.*

This reinforces the previously introduced theory that homosocial type of consumption for primary reasons and in the presence of other men and with other men can take place and can be exercised by the men in and from the North East.

The Turkish baths facilities are marketed for different gender, with some days being specifically open for females, others days for males and, finally, some days for visitors of both genders. John, Andrea and William select days that most suit their consumption preferences: whether it is for *heterosocial* interaction or *homosocial* type of *consumption*. For example, John mentions a particular spa that he went to with his wife and his daughter:

*Alternatively, another venue that we've been to would be the spa at Harrogate, a famous Victorian spa at Harrogate that has – it's famous for its design which resembles a kind of Islamic art, mosaics and has all the steam rooms and offers massage facilities. So that was a deliberate choice: I have done that in this country and ... occasionally abroad.*

Research participants indicate that in most cases men prefer to improve their health and wellbeing in the Turkish type of spas which are known for their traditional surroundings and curative health properties. It is these type of spas that attract men's attention the most rather than those ones that offer luxurious ambience and beautification.

Drawing on the above provided analysis of the data gathered, spa services can be purchased as *primary products* by men; nonetheless, the male market segment does not completely accept services which sell health, wellbeing and beauty benefits. These are conditions, which should be taken into account by the marketing and spa business developers to create a successful and long-lasting business-customer relationship with male clients in the wellness and beauty market. This will be discussed in the last chapter of this study (Chapter 7), whilst the last section of this chapter examines the type of masculinity male spa users construct due to the aforementioned conditions when consuming or contemplating to consume spa services.

## **5.9 Consequences – Conflicted masculinities**

The analysis of all 14 semi-structured interviews reveals the struggles contemporary men undergo when consuming spa products in *the North East*. The feeling of insecurity and hesitation was felt throughout all the interviews due to a high possibility of experiencing undesirable *social stigma*. It did not feel as if men go to spas freely and in a relaxed manner. Their consumer behaviour showed the level of pressure that these individuals encounter from both the *sociocultural norms* and the *mass media* when making their spa purchasing decisions. On one hand, men are pressurised to conform to the hegemonic masculinity ideals and adopt the heteronormative male behaviour model. On the other hand, they are also informed by the mass media about the changing male body maintenance and the popularised indulgent and healthy ways of living. Therefore, a spa business together with its current and prospective male visitors falls in the middle of two influences that make the consumption of spa services appealing and avoidable at the same time. Samuel and Ben's perspectives gathered at the theory validation stage reflect this conflict:

*I have no hesitation in saying, yes these are two very different spheres and they are in conflict, so masculine self-image certainly. How spas fit into it, I think it's not quite so clear. I guess they do, but there are also other things that are going on with spas about affluence and urban life, about the availability of recreational space, stress factors and so forth, which are also operating in the question with spas, I think. But if you look at the male self-image and how men think of themselves and how they try to appear, yeah, I certainly agree with that. There are these two different ways of life. One of the things which is remarkable is how men, for instance, in rural Northumberland stick to their way of life, regardless, and this a bit remarkable. They are quite unbending and just carry on.*

(Samuel)

*Yeah, I think they are in conflict to a point. I think once they go into the age, where they get into their early twenties and everybody around them is doing that, I think they are all right.*

(Ben)

Although Samuel mentions that other important aspects like affluence, the level of stress and the availability of spas in a specific location also come into play when deciding whether to spend one's leisure in a spa, it is the social order that dictates how and what men are supposed to consume. In addition, this social and cultural environment forms perceptions of masculinity and determines how and where contemporary masculinities should be constructed. Ben indicates that for those men who want to construct their masculinities in a healthy or innovative but not heteronormative way, this can be problematic:

*I think they are scared slightly because of ... scared slightly because of what the other people might think of them doing it.*

Doing gender in a different way (Mavin and Grandy, 2012, 2013), which in the spa consumption context means as women do, can attract social judgement and stigmatisation, since in the North East of England spas are perceived as a feminine leisure practice:

*Yeah. I think if I said I was going to a spa, they'd presume I was gay or they'd presume ... I don't know, yeah. I think it's quite a girly thing to do or a gay man to have thing to do. It's not really for heterosexuals to go for. So you definitely you get a label attached to you. I presume you would anyway. I would presume as well, so. Cause it is not often you'd hear if it would be five lads going to a spa. I think that's quite an unusual stuff.*

(Andrew)

From the heteronormative perspective, spas are viewed as an inappropriate activity for men; therefore they are mainly visited by the female clientele:

*And there weren't a lot of men when we went. In fact we stood up like a sore thumb. Most of the people that were there were women, I would say.*

(William)

This invokes conflict within men whether spa services should be consumed or how they should be consumed. It is therefore difficult for men to openly share their spa experiences with their male friends or select male confidants as spa companions. The excerpt from the interview with Ben reflects this inner turmoil:

*Yeah there is, I don't ... yeah there is. There is there is, depending on the social situation, there is definitely a conflict ... between what you want to say and what you can't say.*

(Ben)

Social pressure is encountered by both heterosexual and homosexual males. A prejudiced assumption for being gay drives a heterosexual man away from entering spas. In the case of a homosexual consumer, a spa companion is sought purposely, and carefully selected to avoid accusations of going to a spa for sexual reasons. Equally, a homosexual spa consumer does not find spending time in spas so comfortable due to his exposed gay identity. William gave an impression that homosexual male consumers experience less confusion when choosing spas for their leisure since the beauty aspect is important and highly appreciated by them. However, the feeling of conflict is not alien to them. For example, Andrew, like heterosexual research participants, chooses to keep a *secret* rather than disclose information:

*Just because it's quite ... it's not embarrassing but they'd be like "Oh, what is it? Is that not what the girls go for?" and things. I think it is because we are quite slow up here to understand things, so no, I think it's quite private almost. It's quite what you wanna do in your own spare time. So.*

Despite the reported gender liberation, new models of masculinity are still less popular than its traditional constructions. Research participants depict the North East as a conservative location for the spa to be accepted as a legitimate men's leisure activity as it is in London:

*Not yet, no. I think cause I work out of London, it's completely different in London. If I lived in London, I probably would go to spas a lot more. Cause it's more acceptable, it is more ...it's more normal. It's part of their life. But we are quite slow up here to catch onto things like that.*

(Andrew)

This depiction of the North East of England gives an impression that for the liberal consumers consuming spa services can be distressing because of the tendency to assign specific consumption to a specific gender or sexual category. Therefore, straight male consumers do not find the idea of aestheticizing one's appearance in a spa appealing. First of all, it can easily create an inner conflict as such type of grooming is not common and therefore discomforting. William illustrates this:

*Yeah, I think so. And similarly I think, coming to the whole thing of image, body image, self-image, I think some guys wouldn't necessarily think of it as something that they would like, that they would do because it is outside of their comfort zone.*

Secondly, even selecting spas for the improvement of one's wellbeing does not receive the highest approval from the local males. Stigmatisation for improving physical appearance by attending spa services that are renowned for their curative and beautifying properties, leave men contemplate, whether to comply with the strict *sociocultural norms* and reject spas or accept the wellbeing and indulgence services and embrace new masculine qualities popularised by the mass media. One such new trait in the construction of masculine identities is the *body aestheticization*, acquired through intensive grooming. Yet, contemporary manhood struggles to adopt this practice fully or overtly in their daily or leisure routines. This concerns both heterosexual and homosexual men. Thus, the described scenario results in conflict and the construction of *conflicted masculinities*.

The conflict that the contemporary British male spa users go through in *the North East* is observed in the pre-purchasing and post-purchasing situations, and during the actual consumption of spa and grooming products and services. Conflicted masculinities are constructed in the current social environment due to an experienced *dissonance*, when deciding when, how and with whom to consume wellbeing and beauty services in spas. Equally, the interviewed male visitors encounter social problems not only in finding spa companions, but also when sharing their spa experiences with male friends. Disapproval received from other men has a negative impact on the consequent consumption of spas as the analysis of the data gathered shows. Therefore, they

predominantly accept spas as by-products and experience dissonance, which again creates conflict in themselves and in how they use and envisage spas in this part of the country.

## **5.10 Chapter summary**

The theory of social pressure, presented in this chapter, was generated from the data gathered in 14 semi-structured interviews. This theory has been discussed by outlining its four main parts: the conditions, the central phenomenon, the actions/interactions and the consequences, arising as a result of the interplay between the mentioned parts of the theory. The findings presented will be discussed alongside the existing literature in Chapter 6, the purpose of which is to confirm the findings and identify the gaps in knowledge, whilst the subsequent Chapter 7 will specify theoretical and methodological contributions and provide recommendations for spa businesses and management that seek to create services for the evolving male consumer market. In addition, it will also contain information about the limitations of this study and draw a guideline for future research.



# Chapter 6: The emergent theory within extant literature

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## 6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the emergent theory within the broad extant literature. In the previous chapter, the theory developed from the male spa users' multiple perspectives was discussed separately, allowing the reader to have a clear picture of the theoretical model, its components and the relationship between them. The aim of this chapter, however, is to present the derived theory within the realms of related literature in order to validate the former and extend and refine the available knowledge in the studied field (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). It was felt that integration of the scholarly knowledge in the previous chapter would obstruct the readership from understanding the theory whilst unnecessarily extending the length of the chapter at the same time. Therefore, the comparison of the empirical findings with the literature is presented separately in this chapter.

The literature, to which the emergent grounded theory is compared, is comprised mainly of consumer and gender research. Nevertheless, it also includes scholarly fields, which have not previously been considered relevant for this study, for instance, counselling psychology, social and clinical psychology, the food industry, economics, and education, not to mention tourism and wellbeing literature. Grounded methodologists note that the established knowledge used for supporting some elements of the theory developed may not necessarily be that to which the research conducted is going to contribute (Locke, 2001). This is the case in this research, which had to go beyond the fields of gender and consumer behaviour in order to show how the issues and concepts, mentioned in the theoretical model, were discussed and presented in other areas of research.

The findings of this social constructionist research led to an exploration of a whole new body of literature surrounding the concepts of culture and sociocultural norms, the mass media, social pressure, dissonance and conflicted masculinities that respectively represent conditions, the phenomenon, the state during the process of actions/interactions and the consequences in the theory presented. All these concepts emerged from the analysis of the male spa users' varied consumption realities. The

notions mentioned here will be discussed in the following sections of this chapter, starting with the main phenomenon, which is social pressure.

## 6.2 Social pressure

The topic of social pressure has received abundant attention in scholarly sources, the spectrum of which embraces the fields of marketing (Klesse *et al.* 2012; Maignan and Ferrell, 2001), business ethics (Henle, Reeve and Pitts, 2010; Lotila, 2010), economics and management (Baron, 2009), public health (Miller and Miller, 2009), gender studies (Roberts, 2011) and social and clinical psychology (Basow, Foran and Bookwala, 2007; Dittmar, 2005; Heinberg and Thompson, 1995; Joshi, Herman and Polivy, 2004). The contexts in which social pressure has been explored varies from corporate social responsibility with the issues of corporate responsiveness (Lotila, 2010), corporate citizenship (Maignan and Ferrell, 2001) or corporate social performance (Baron, 2009) to unethical behaviour in organisations with time theft being the research topic in the mentioned area (Henle, Reeve and Pitts, 2010).

In the fields of public health, gender research and social and clinical psychology, social pressure has been discussed in relation to body work, which can take place in the form of exercise (Miller and Miller, 2009), dieting (Heinberg and Thompson, 1995; Joshi, Herman and Polivy, 2004) or alterations and modifications of the female body (Roberts, 2011). Similarly, consumer research has shed light on the impact the exposure of thin body ideals in the mass media leaves on the female consumers' self-body evaluations and success in achieving dieting goals (Klesse *et al.* 2012).

Although the majority of studies mentioned here have focused on social pressure in different contexts to this research, they can still serve to help us better understand what social pressure is and how it affects those who happen to experience it. Thus, the purpose of the following subsections is to provide the definitions already available (see subsection 6.2.1) and to present the similarities and differences of the concept of social pressure in the emergent grounded theory, developed in this study, with the one that the existing body of literature proposes. The latter discussion will concentrate on three themes: the sources and the objects of social pressure, presented in the subsections 6.2.2 and 6.2.3 respectively and the responses to social pressure provided in subsection 6.2.4.

## **6.2.1 Definition of social pressure**

Scholarly sources define social pressure as a social demand (Lotila, 2010), which in the context of corporate responsibility is applied to the company's obligation to work towards the betterment of society, by establishing favourable relationships with stakeholder groups (Lotila, 2010; Maignan and Ferrell, 2001). Society, as a stakeholder, expects from a company the distribution of goods or other economic benefits to social causes (Baron, 2009). In another context, that of unethical behaviour, social pressure was presented as a subjective norm to be performed and a specific behaviour to be abstained from through compliance with the expectations of the referent others (e.g., supervisors, colleagues, friends or family) (Henle, Reeve and Pitts, 2010). As suggested by Henle, Reeve and Pitts (2010), social pressure that comes from important others cannot be ignored by management; hence, the time-theft problem should be tackled by creating a positive ethical work climate.

The social pressure which is experienced by the male spa users interviewed is similar to that described in organisational studies in the area of unethical behaviour (Henle, Reeve and Pitts, 2010). It is perceived as the need to comply with prevalent sociocultural norms while avoiding the behaviour (often related to the consumption of spas and explicit grooming) that would place them under scrutiny. This sense of compliance appears to be strong and deeply entrenched in the consumption habits of North East men. Hence, sometimes it can remain unrecognised as social pressure, being perceived as a matter of naturally occurring social conditioning that determines male gender practices. This pattern remains unnoticed by men themselves until they are challenged to undo their gender practices by embracing qualities or activities that are highly associated with women. In this case, the latter practices are viewed as risky and threatening to hegemonic masculinities, and thus, performed by the males only under specific conditions, which would allow male spa users to act within secure boundaries and keep their masculinities unchallenged by meeting the demands of the two sources of social pressure. These will be discussed in section 6.2.2 provided below.

## **6.2.2 Sources of social pressure**

### **6.2.2.1 Society**

The review of the business ethics and management literature (Baron, 2009; Henle, Reeve and Pitts, 2010; Lotila, 2010) related to social pressure shows that the

phenomenon is generated and applied by society rather than by formal institutional bodies. For instance, social influence can be created by various agencies from government to public politics (Baron, 2009); yet, research into corporate responsibility mainly addresses the pressure that comes from citizens. According to Baron (2009), society is an active contributor to social pressures since it “encourages the private provision of public goods and corporate redistribution” (Baron, 2009, p. 8). In addition, the same trend is noticed in the area of management, where employees show a tendency to comply with expectations of important others, such as family, friends and colleagues (Henle, Reeve and Pitts, 2010).

The same tendency is registered in the studies of public health and clinical and social psychology. These two research areas also report social pressure deriving from a distant or more close social circle of the subject (Basow, Foran and Bookwala, 2007; Miller and Miller, 2009). For instance, overweight people experience a social obligation to exercise at a club, and the social pressure which they encounter from significant others appears to be stronger for those who are more overweight, as well as being more intense for men than for women (Miller and Miller, 2009). Overall, the empirical results of the aforementioned studies show, that the social environment in which people live determines consumers’ actions, creating various consequences that can often be negative.

The findings of the current study do not significantly differ from the body of literature discussed here, given that the social pressure, which the male spa users experience in the North East, also comes from society or, in other words, the sociocultural environment. In this social setting, there is an expectation from men to comply with traditional masculine norms by playing the role of the breadwinner and leading a physically active lifestyle.

#### **6.2.2.2 Media**

A further body of literature, which empirically contributes to the notion of social pressure in relation to body work and body image, presents the source of pressure as a more formal institution. This is the mass media, which directs consumer actions towards achieving the ideal body image, as presented in advertising in printed and broadcast media. The media impact has received abundant attention in gender studies and consumer research (Heinberg and Thompson, 1995; Joshi, Herman and Polivy, 2004; Klesse *et al.* 2012; Myers and Biocca, 1992). This body of work acknowledges

the existence of social pressure to look after oneself, and this in particular applies to women. As Roberts (2011) notes, in Western society women experience various types of pressures: among many of them are pressures at work, and the expectation that you should follow fashion and live up to certain ideals of femininity.

Past and recent research into the media impact on consumption actions also mentions the difficulties consumers face (i.e. inconsistency in food consumption and unattainable dieting goals) when being exposed to thin body images presented in the media (Klesse *et al.* 2012). For instance, this can result in a decrease in body satisfaction, self-esteem or self-image (Heinberg and Thompson, 1995; Joshi, Herman and Polivy, 2004). Drawing on the theory of social comparison (Festinger, 1954), people frequently evaluate self-images with the images of others through the act of social comparison, and, therefore, have a tendency to change their self-evaluation and accept the obligation to construct an ideal self after being exposed to attractive body images, presented extensively by the media (Klesse *et al.* 2012).

Although the men in the current study did not report low self-esteem as a result of the media impact, they were nevertheless found to compare themselves with the images of celebrities, known in the world of sport, TV or film industries. The men interviewed acknowledge the educational and promoting role of the media with some men learning how to relate to others and improve their social skills or lead a healthy lifestyle; while others admit experiencing general social pressure to look better or be more conscious of their physical appearance. Hence, as a result, the latter group of male respondents construct their image by attaining a lean and fit body physique at the gym, whilst other men engage in grooming practices at home and in spas. Despite the common trend among scholarly sources to report the negative impact of the media, its role can be of a more positive nature as the findings of the emergent theory show. This mirrors the view of another group of scholars presented in the paragraph below.

Not all scholars agree with the prevalent notion that exposure to thin body images in the media decreases the positive evaluation of one's body. On the contrary, viewing thin and idealised model images may invoke a positive self-evaluation (Joshi, Herman and Polivy, 2004), which can arise due to the "fantasy effect" when women imagine themselves in their ideal body shape (Myers and Biocca, 1992). In the context of men's motives for spa use and grooming, men also acknowledge the positive impact of the media, which, as stated above, appears to be playing a promoting and educating role that encourages men to embrace a better and healthier standard of life by attending

gyms and spas afterwards, and by improving their physical looks through engagement in body aestheticization practices.

### **6.2.3 Objects of social pressure**

The findings of the research undertaken into men's motives for spa use and grooming are in line with the existing literature. Men have reported, although not explicitly in all cases, being concerned about how they look, and this shows that an interest in one's physical appearance is not only limited to women. Research in social and clinical psychology also records the shift in the objects of social pressure. For example, a study by Dittmar (2005) argues that the social pressure, which has for years encouraged women to attain a thin body physique, has now shifted its attention to men. Men have become the objects of judgment on their physical appearance as the pressure for attaining an ideal male body image is increasing. As stated by Dittmar (2005), a growing dissatisfaction with one's body is witnessed among males due to the influence of the media, as well as the impact of family and friends. Nevertheless, a family as the source of social pressure was not reported by the interviewed men as significantly strong and for this reason it has not been included in the emergent theory.

### **6.2.4 Responses to social pressure**

According to the business literature, corporate responsiveness to social pressure is an iterative process and "the way the management perceives social pressure affects the way it manages relations with society" (Lotila, 2010, p. 400). As suggested, the approach that a company might implement can vary from tactic to strategic or even inactive approaches (Lotila, 2010).

In the context of the spa, the duality of pressure that the male spa users experience also results in either tactic or even inactive strategies implemented in the consumption of spa services. It has been reported that the number of male spa users in Newcastle or in general in the North East of England is low in comparison to London. Thus, overall men employ an inactive approach to spas – they simply withdraw from consuming spas for their leisure. On the other hand, men, who happen to use spas, use them mainly as complementary services in conjunction with the purchases of the gym sessions or a hotel stay. What becomes interesting here is the tactic employed in selecting spa companions, who are carefully chosen and may be their female partners or male friends. However, the latter consumers can be invited to join the male spa-

goers if they meet specific criteria. A friendly relationship between the two men is a must factor, as well as commonality in sexual orientation and an interest in going to spas. These conditions mentioned above will be discussed in a more detail in section 6.6 By-product.

The interaction model developed by Lotila (2010) suggests that cultural impact should be taken into account when responding to social pressure. A successful responsiveness to social issues very much depends on the ability to manage cultural differences between the company's home and the host country where the business operates (Lotila, 2010). In the context of spa and grooming consumption, the theory of social pressure put forward in this study also suggests that regional sociocultural specifications must also be considered if services for the niche market segment are to be developed.

In the context of corporate responsiveness to social pressure, the interaction model developed by Lotila (2010) contributes to the development of a communication theory for international business. On the contrary, the emergent grounded theory about social pressure in the area of spa use and grooming practices makes a contribution specifically to the local rather than national or international business providers by preparing them to consider the implementation of appropriate communication and marketing strategies to reach the targeted consumer market.

Sociocultural perspectives with regards to masculinity appear to be crucial factors and conditions that can have a direct impact on the prosperity, success and longevity of the business operating in the North East of England; hence they cannot be ignored but should be tackled adequately to attract potential clients. Similarly, Dittmar (2005) suggests that social pressure problems should be solved by identifying factors that force individuals to be receptive to those sociocultural pressures rather than just treating them as detrimental to the image of individuals.

The following section of this chapter responds, albeit unintentionally, to Dittmar's (2005) suggestion, providing the reasons for consumer responsiveness to the sociocultural impact, as identified in the established scholarly knowledge and the emergent grounded theory of social pressure.

## **6.3 Culture**

The concept of culture, extensively mentioned and discussed by the male research interviewees, is a popular and widely researched topic within the academic world. Both marketing and gender studies have explored the issues that surround consumer and culture relationships (de Mooij, 2011), placing particular emphasis on the strong cultural influence on consumer market actions (Hawkins, Mothersbaugh and Best, 2007). In the PhD study, this relationship is analysed in the context of male spa consumer behaviour by looking into how the prevalent sociocultural norms, including current perceptions of masculinity, impact upon their purchasing actions in relation to spa and grooming products and services in the North East of England. In order to further the understanding of how consumer actions are influenced by sociocultural conditions, the following subsections will outline what the existing literature has to say about the impact of culture and sociocultural norms and how it is similar to the new empirical findings in this study.

### **6.3.1 Culture impact**

Consumer behaviour research defines culture as a set of values, beliefs, customs and actions that are learnt and shared among members of a society (Baines, Fill and Page, 2011; de Mooij, 2011). It provides a sense of understanding of what is acceptable and expected within a specific geographical area (Baines, Fill and Page, 2011; de Mooij, 2011), and through the agreed sociocultural norms it shapes the behaviour of an individual, actively contributing to gender constructions within that society. "Individuals are products of their culture and their social groupings; therefore, they are conditioned by their sociocultural environment to act in certain manners" (de Mooij, 2011, p. 33).

In the context of male consumer behaviour, sociologists support the view that culture is a force that makes men act in the way that appears appropriate in the lived social environment (Ward, Merriwether and Caruthers, 2006). This echoes with the opinion of Dunlap and Johnson (2013) for whom culture stands as a cause and effect of masculine behaviour. Since masculinity, as described by Connell (1995), is a performance of male gender roles, which are constantly negotiated through social relations between individuals and social institutions, culture without a doubt has the power to lead men's consumption practices, and male spa users in the North East are not an exception. The voices of the men interviewed that come from different backgrounds reveal that this is the case with sociocultural norms having a strong



impact on their purchasing decisions when it comes to selecting beauty and wellbeing services for their leisure, pleasure or utilitarian needs. This view goes in line with the social constructionist epistemological claim that this research adopts. According to the social constructionist approach, people's actions and relations are influenced and informed by culture through social interactions and language (Crotty, 1998; Gubrium and Holstein, 2008; Hallebone and Priest, 2009).

Consumer research presents culture as a constantly changing social system in which changes are inevitable due to various external factors such as environmental, technological or economic developments (Evans, Jamal and Foxal, 2009). Nevertheless, when it comes to male consumer attitudes to spas and grooming practices, the male spa users' consumption patterns remain almost unchanged, at least in the North East region. Although marketing companies and businesses emphasise the importance of physical appearance and promote appealing male images through advertising in the mass media, the evidence gathered from the actual North East male spa visitors shows that men remain loyal to their traditional breadwinning role and physical activeness. As a result, they attribute pampering pleasures to the experiences of female consumers, as the established clientele of the beauty and wellbeing business.

### **6.3.2 Sociocultural norms**

The theory presented in this study through the interpretive empirical findings disputes the view within current marketing research that gendered consumption is a thing of the past (Firat, 1994; Patterson and Elliott, 2002). The data gathered shows that the habit of classifying activities into those appropriate for men and women is still deeply entrenched in the North East society. The practice of male respondents reflects this pattern despite the blurring of male and female consumption boundaries in the post-gender era (Firat, 1994; Patterson and Elliott, 2002).

The emergent theory resonates with another view within consumer behaviour and gender literature, which acknowledges that consumption is gendered (Avery, 2012). The existing literature argues that shopping and body prettification in general remains the concern of female customers (Davis, 2002; Kimmel and Tissier-Desbordes, 2000; Tuncay and Otnes, 2008). Additionally, the tendency to view practices as binary also occurs in the work environment. For example, organisational research reports occupational gender patterns and stereotyping in organisations, with managerial

positions still being predominantly occupied by male leaders (Billing, 2011; Mavin, 2009; Patterson, Mavin and Turner, 2012), and this trend contributes towards occupational gender segregation (Brady *et al.* 2011).

### **6.3.2.1 Gender norms**

Gender binary is still applied in various life spheres due to the prevalent understanding of what is classed as masculine and feminine. In organisational research, the social psychologist Hofstede presents masculinity and femininity as one of four cultural dimensions (Hofstede and Bond, 1984). Masculinity and femininity describe both gender behaviours in society and contain specific characteristics that differentiate each gender. From the normative gender perspective, masculinity is understood as the ideology, which claims that certain beliefs, traits and behaviour should be embraced by a man (Thompson and Pleck, 1995). This goes in line with the view of Dunlap and Johnson (2013) who state that the male gender ideal is being constructed on the basis of appreciating masculine values over feminine. This differentiation is also applied in the consumer market and is based on the psychologically and socially constructed gender roles (Levant and Pollack, 1995).

According to Levant and Pollack (1995), gender roles are defined by stereotypes and norms that are learnt in childhood and passed on through various social and cultural institutions, such as family, school and peers, who “subscribe to the prevailing masculinity ideology” (Levant and Pollack, 1995, p. 3). For Mills *et al.* (2012), stereotypes stand as a reflection of gender segregation based on the prescribed gender roles and expectations of how each gender should behave. In the past, men were brought up to comply with traditional masculine roles, by primarily being breadwinners, possessing physical and emotional strength and avoiding anything that would take men closer to femininity (Levant, 1995). Men were associated with the roles of leadership and power and were required to possess agentic characteristics (i.e., being independent, decision maker, aggressive and competitive), while women typically occupied social roles and had to behave relationally and communally (Cameron and Nadler, 2013; Diekman and Goodfriend, 2006).

As shown in the gathered contextual data, the male gender roles presented above remain appreciated and practiced by men even today. According to Murgia and Poggio (2013), organisational structures, culture and practices are based on the hegemonic masculinity norms that give man his place as the financial provider and head of the

household. Although traditional masculinity, as Levant (1995) claims, collapsed in the last years of the twentieth century, the traditional male codes are still valued by many contemporary societies and communities (Levant, 1995; Murgia and Poggio, 2013). As a result of this, we see and experience stagnation in gender norms. This explains why men adopt new consumption practices in their grooming routines and leisure activities reluctantly or even with resistance, and in some cases choose to reject them completely. The next section looks at what has already been discussed in the extant literature in relation to stagnant gender norms.

### **6.3.3 Stagnation in gender norms**

The concept of stagnation has not been directly used in gender and consumer research. Hence, this study can contribute to existing knowledge around gender developments in organisational, managerial, marketing and consumer behaviour contexts to better explain the reasons for resistance to change of any kind in various social settings. Nevertheless, an alternative terminology has described stagnating gender norms in social research. For instance, organisational studies report resistance and hegemonic practices being a major obstacle to implementing changes at an institutional level (Murgia and Poggio, 2013). This applies to men struggling to take paternity leave they are entitled to without being evaluated with prejudice for entering the domestic sphere, which in hegemonic gender relations belong to women.

The concept of resistance has also been discovered in the domain of marketing research into consumers' resistance to innovation (Ram and Sheth, 1989; Laukkanen *et al.* 2007), brand gender-bending (Avery, 2012) and brand avoidance (Cherrier, 2009; Lee, Motion and Conroy, 2009). In the theory of consumer resistance to innovation, Ram and Sheth (1989) argued that functional and psychological barriers prevent consumers from adopting new products or ways of consumption. As Laukkanen *et al.* (2007) explain, resistance to novelty is inevitable because innovation adoption relates to a change which upsets the consistent state of affairs, and while consumers prefer existing habits, adaptation to new routines will be greeted with resistance. In the spa consumption context, beauty and wellbeing services offered by the industry of wellness are often rejected by contemporary manhood, as the habit to look after oneself is not within the norms of hegemonic masculinity or traditional male gender roles.

Equally, resistance was found to be practised as a protest to brands implementing a gender-bending strategy (Avery, 2012). Because of the strong association of the brand

with one sex, companies often struggle to attract the consumption market of the opposite sex. It appears that gender is taking a central role in brand construction and, as a result of this, evokes resistance if brands decide to change their consumer gender identity (Avery, 2012). “Gendered brands help materialise gender, enlivening who we are as men or women” (Avery, 2012, p. 323). Hence, any changes are not welcomed since they break the established perception of the brand. This resonates with the findings of the current study, revealing male consumers’ preferences for accustomed and minimal grooming routines. As a result, men resist products and services offered by the businesses that carry feminine brand status like spas in the North East region.

Stagnation in gender norms can also be explained through brand avoidance and anti-consumption theories (Cherrier, 2009; Lee, Motion and Conroy, 2009). Consumer resistance in the brand avoidance context reveal three types of brand avoidance: experiential avoidance due to negative experiences with the brand, identity avoidance as signifying the mismatch between the individual’s identity and the brand’s symbolic meaning, and the moral brand avoidance arising because of the exploitive brand’s behaviour (Lee, Motion and Conroy, 2009). In seeking an explanation to the extent why men in the North East reject spas for their leisure, it can be argued that spa and beauty services are not viewed as essential due to incongruence between their masculine identities (that still predominantly embrace hegemonic male gender values) and the symbolic meanings that cosmetic brands and spa businesses convey through the products and services being offered. Pampering, self-indulgence, self-attentiveness and wellbeing that are offered in spas for building an attractive body image are not within the norms of masculine behaviour. Thus, they are excluded from male customer practices, given that they, as Mills *et al.* (2012) note, can violate the male gender role stereotype. This again marks resistance to innovative grooming practices and places an emphasis on the key role of sociocultural norms in selecting spa services and cosmetics for improving one’s physical appearance in the North East region.

#### **6.3.4 Regional sociocultural norms**

The current climate in spa consumption can be best explained as the after effects of the gender norms that are particularly prominent in the North East of England. Since, as de Mooij (2011) asserts, culture does not exist independently of individuals, thus, they become the active players in creating and constructing their culture and the priorities within it. The previous chapter outlined contextual conditions (gender convergence and freedom of behaviour), which, in the view of the research

participants, could possibly deconstruct gendered consumption practices in this region of England. Similarly, the literature reports that gender role fragmentation can have a positive effect. For instance, changes in work practices with more women equally contributing to the household's economic wellbeing leave a profound impact on gender role norms (Bakewell, Mitchell and Rothwell, 2006).

Nevertheless, such conditions like gender equality or convergence and the given possibility of freedom of behaviour appear to be fragile against the unbending sociocultural norms, which dictate gender role stereotypes in the North East. The male spa users' perspectives resonate with the position of Hort, Fagot and Leibach (1990), who argue that in spite of more fluid gender roles men are still the subjects of sex-role stereotyping. Likewise, it can be argued that men in this part of the country do their gender well, which means according to their sex category (Mavin and Grandy, 2012, 2013). However, the appropriateness of men's actions do not solely relate to how men perceive masculine values, but also how women define maleness, and this perception still appears more rigid in comparison to men's perception of female stereotypes. In the pursuit of an answer, why masculinity is more rigidly defined than femininity, previous studies in sociology suggest that men's activities and achievements are highly recognised in society (Stockard and Johnson, 1979). This situation disapproves of any male cross-gender behaviour, in comparison to female cross-gender practices (Hort, Fagot and Leibach, 1990).

The results of the current social constructionist study into men's motives for spa consumption show that contemporary perceptions of masculinity set by sociocultural norms restricts consumer actions towards specific products or services. Cross-gender behaviour, which in this research means the males' desire to attain a modern image of the self (good looking and well-groomed as a result of self-attentiveness through the use of various body aestheticization practices), is being rejected and stigmatised due to the similarity to the typical female gender roles in the North East. The comparison of the empirical findings of this research with the established knowledge (dating back to the 1990s) reveals no signs of changes in how men are evaluated by society and by males themselves. The findings of this study can draw on the view of Hort, Fagot and Leibach (1990) that "more draconian notions of gender appropriateness to males" (p. 211) are continued to be applied in contemporary times in the North East.

Continuing on the notion of freedom of choice, Diekmann and Goodfriend (2006) critically evaluate the possibility for the prescriptive gender beliefs (how each gender

should behave) to become malleable, given that they restrict social change (Eagly and Diekman, 2005). As a result, men have been resistant to embodying new forms of masculinity since the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Garst and Bodenhausen, 1997) and continue faithfully to adopt the traditional male role behaviours in the new millennium.

To conclude, culture is seen as an active contributor to the way masculinity is performed (Kivel and Johnson, 2009). With hegemonic masculinity dominating in the current historically and geographically defined area of the North East of England, stagnation and illiberalism remain the main constraints, prohibiting other forms of masculinity from being completely and socially legitimised. This current situation can be explained in terms of hegemonic masculinity having authority over other masculinities, therefore, making it difficult for other definitions to challenge it openly (Kivel and Johnson, 2009). As a result, those who cross male gender boundaries face unpleasant consequences. These are discussed in the section 6.3.5.

### **6.3.5 Consequences**

The extant literature, investigating issues of gender role violations, agrees on the consequences which individuals face if they choose to employ practices that oppose conventional gender norms. These consequences have been discussed in the gender literature (Garst and Bodenhausen, 1997; de Visser, 2009; Whitley, 2001), organisational studies (Murgia and Poggio, 2013), psychology (Diekman and Goodfriend, 2006; Rudman and Fairchild, 2004), counselling psychology (Vogel *et al.* 2011; Vogel *et al.* 2014) and marketing (Avery, 2012). Scholarship unanimously agrees that violation of traditional gender roles results in devaluation or, as de Visser (2009) states, attribution to the opposite gender identities. Diekman and Goodfriend (2006) explain this through the role congruity theory (Eagly and Diekman, 2005). This theory argues that the prescribed gender characteristics, if in line with the social roles, are rewarded, while characteristics that misalign with the demands are devalued. Rudman and Fairchild (2004) use the word “penalty” to describe the consequences encountered by those transgressing gender role boundaries.

Garst and Bodenhausen (1997) agrees that culture has a strong influence on men’s consumption practices, and men with more traditional or hegemonic male gender role behaviours are more appreciated than their counterparts who practice more feminine characteristics in their social lives. “Indeed, traditional gender norms may be so powerful that individuals will devalue gender non-normative characteristics even if

these characteristics may be useful in some contexts” (Diekman and Goodfriend, 2006). As is evident in the spa consumption context, a man’s desire to improve his physical appearance through beauty and wellbeing practices results in stigmatisation, which takes the form of ridicule and associations with homosexuality. Social devaluation is employed because the above-mentioned activities fall into the female consumers’ area of concern.

Marketing and gender scholarship is consistent with the findings of this study. As an example, male consumers avoid gender-bending brands to circumvent the above-mentioned stigmatisation (Avery, 2012). Furthermore, men who are concerned with their self-presentation contravene the sociocultural norms and can be labelled as effeminate or homosexual (Edwards, 2006; Davis, 2002; Hall and Gough, 2011; Hall, Gough and Seymour-Smith, 2012; Hall, Gough, Seymour-Smith and Hansen, 2012). Equally, stigma can affect men in other social contexts. For instance, research in counselling psychology highlights the same problem faced by men if they seek help from mental health services, given that these social institutions are associated with weak and unmanly individuals (Vogel *et al.* 2011; Vogel *et al.* 2014).

#### **6.3.5.1 Stigmatisation from the close male circle**

Practices that fall outside the conventional male gender roles are first of all disapproved of by other males. The male spa users’ voices reveal that their motives for choosing spa or grooming services can be misjudged by their male friends. The extant literature agrees with the idea that a close male social network does not support other men in seeking counselling and psychotherapy (Vogel *et al.* 2011). Due to fear of exposure to social judgment, potential male clients do not share their mental health issues with other male friends or family members of the same sex; as such topics in Western culture are classed as “nonmasculine” and falling outside the traditional male gender roles (Vogel *et al.* 2014). Similarly, the notion of secrecy prevails in the spa consumption context, with some men admitting that they do not share their leisure preference for spa with other men to avoid the label of being feminine or gay. To conclude, men in general support anti-gay behaviour, invoked by a strong adherence to traditional gender roles, and perceive homosexuality as a deviation from the normative definition of manhood (Whitley, 2001).

The current social constructionist study established that culture influences male consumer behaviour, and this is similar to what the available literature has outlined.

This congruence with the current research-based knowledge adds credibility to the emergent theory and supports the decision to use the concept of sociocultural norms as a social condition in the proposed theory of social pressure, which consequently affects the behaviour of male spa users and their attitude towards spas in the North East. Yet, another source exists, which is the media, which equally affects the actions of male consumers in this part of Britain. Its impact will be discussed in more detail in the following section 6.4.

## **6.4 Media impact**

The mass media has been identified from the male research participants' spa consumption experiences as another social source in shaping contemporary masculinities and creating social pressure in the North East region. It was argued in Chapter 5 that this social institution plays the role of the push factor, encouraging contemporary men to embrace an innovative approach to grooming and leisure practices. The topic of the media's impact on behavioural actions has drawn the attention of scholars from the fields of sociology (Agliata and Tantleff-Dunn, 2004; Coffey, 2013; Conseur, Hathcote and Kim, 2008; Edwards, 2006; Harrison, 2008; Ricciardelli, Clow and White, 2010; Rohlinger, 2002), advertising (Amos, Holmes and Strutton, 2008; Choi and Rifon, 2007; Eisend and Langner, 2010; de los Salmones, Dominguez and Herrero, 2013) and consumer behaviour (Bakewell, Mitchell and Rothwell, 2006; Bush, Martin and Bush, 2004; Chan and Zhang, 2007; Dix, Phau and Pougnet, 2010; Grohmann, Battistella and Radons, 2013; Martin and Bush, 2000; McCracken, 1989; Patterson and Elliott, 2002; Schroeder and Zwick, 2004). A few scholars in particular focused on the media's impact on the development of masculinity and masculine identities (Dunlap and Johnson, 2013; Ricciardelli, Clow and White, 2010; Schroeder and Zwick, 2004), while others were interested in research into body aestheticization work that the media encourage (Conseur, Hathcote and Kim, 2008; Harrison, 2008; Ricciardelli, Clow and White, 2010).

The pressure that the mass media exerts on the male consumer market segment is experienced as the need to engage in creating an aesthetic body image. In the previous chapter, it was argued that the mass media evokes interest in body aestheticism through the attractive body images displayed in the media, which encourage society to pay more attention to physical appearance (Conseur, Hathcote and Kim, 2008; Ricciardelli, Clow and White, 2010; Patterson and Elliott, 2002). According to Schroeder and Zwick (2004), through their combination of aesthetics and



technological developments, advertising images “produce powerful, persuasive simulations of a real world” (p. 30). Hence, it could be argued that the male models advertise body aestheticism and, as a result, change perceptions of masculine values, which in this context are based on physical looks rather than the actual behaviour (Bakewell, Mitchell and Rothwell, 2006). “In other words, we make judgements on the basis of what something looks like rather than what it does and this applies also to the appearance of men” (Bakewell, Mitchell and Rothwell, 2006, p. 171). Hence, good looks and good taste become the standards of male attractiveness (Schroeder and Zwick, 2004), which can be manipulated and enhanced through body work (Ricciardelli, Clow and White, 2010). The results of this study are in line with the gender and consumer behaviour literature, which unanimously acknowledges the strong influence of the media on promoting body beautification that is undertaken by both men and women in response to social pressure, in order to attain and maintain an idealized and aesthetically appealing body image.

As was argued in Chapter 2, the philosophy of aesthetics, developed in Germany in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, was initially applied to the fine arts (White, 1996). However, more recently, it has also been applied to other areas of culture, where a judgment on the nature of beauty has become relevant. While in a broad sense it means a sensory experience of any kind (White, 1996), in postmodernity it conveys the meaning of beauty and it is associated with appealing images that can be applied both to commodities as well as human bodies. Featherstone (2010) explains body image as the mental perception of one’s body from the perspective of observers. Body image is often used as an instrument to achieve status and social acceptability, given that physical appearance is often perceived as a reflection of personality (Featherstone, 2010). In this sense, various aesthetic body modifications become tools for constructing a beautiful appearance and a beautiful self (Featherstone, 2010). Featherstone (2010) further argues that images of other bodies invoke the desire for transformation in the self and this mainly comes from the images seen in consumer culture, as well as the media.

### **6.4.1 Role models**

Ample evidence of the influence of media models can be found in research carried out in the areas of consumer behaviour (Bakewell, Mitchell and Rothwell, 2006; Bush, Martin and Bush, 2004; Chan and Zhang, 2007; Dix, Phau and Pougnet, 2010; Grohmann, Battistella and Radons, 2013; Martin and Bush, 2000; McCracken, 1989; Patterson and Elliott, 2002), gender (Coffey, 2013) and advertising (Amos, Holmes and

Strutton, 2008; Choi and Rifon, 2007; Eisend and Langner, 2010; de los Salmones, Dominguez and Herrero, 2013). In the emergent theory, media models have been identified as role models for those attempting to create an attractive self. Their influence in consumption will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

Scholars present celebrities and advertising models as symbols of class and status, constructed and commoditised by the media to sell products, brands and images (Bakewell, Mitchell and Rothwell, 2006; Patterson and Elliott, 2002) which are endorsed by the uniqueness of the models (Choi and Rifon, 2007). Celebrities are perceived as sources with persuasive power to invoke intentional behaviour (de los Salmones, Dominguez and Herrero, 2013). They are able to enhance advertising effectiveness, particularly if their credibility is elevated (Eisend and Langner, 2010).

#### **6.4.1.1 Theories and models**

A wide body of literature agrees about the traits that comprise celebrity credibility. These are expertise and trustworthiness (Amos, Holmes and Strutton, 2008; Choi and Rifon, 2007; de los Salmones, Dominguez and Herrero, 2013), while other scholars argued that celebrity attractiveness should also be included in the extensively researched model of source credibility (Amos, Holmes and Strutton, 2008; Eisend and Langner, 2010), since it can also increase positive attitudes towards the brand or product being promoted (Eisend and Langner, 2010). Eisend and Langner (2010) see this action as beneficial for the company if the endorser of the advertised brand is both physically attractive and knowledgeable.

In addition, McCracken (1989) suggested that the endorser, as a medium, not only contributes to strengthening the persuasiveness of the advertised message but also passes his/her symbolic meanings onto consumers during their consumption of promoted brand and products. This process has been identified as a “meaning transfer” in the proposed Meaning Transfer Model (McCracken, 1989).

Images of perfect bodies in advertisements attract the gaze of the audience and invoke the process of comparison (Carlson and Donovan, 2008). This resonates with the social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954), which explains that people evaluate their own opinions and abilities against other people’s views and skills (Festinger, 1954) and their physical appearance with the body image of others (Irving, 1990; Morrison, Kalin and Morrison, 2004). When such comparisons cannot be made with ordinary people,

then advertising models are sought for self-evaluation (D'Alessandro and Chitty, 2011). The search for congruity between the body of the self and the others, as the data from this research and the emergent theory shows, leads to a growing interest in body grooming practices, which is particularly strong among the young male consumer market.

#### **6.4.1.2 The impact of role models on young consumers**

The social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) argued that the impact of the role model is achieved through direct contact between the subject and the object. Through the process of consumption socialization, from early childhood young customers acquire the abilities, attitudes and knowledge about the act of consumption which they need (Ward, 1974) and continue developing the relevant competence during the teenage years (Grohmann, Battistella and Radons, 2013). Nevertheless, consumption behaviours (knowledge, attitudes and skills) can also be learned through the observation of the media (Bandura, 1977; Martin and Bush, 2000). For example, Bush, Martin and Bush (2004) argue that direct contact is not required to make an impact on the individual, given that celebrity endorsement can also reach consumers from a distance and form their consumption decisions.

The emergent theory is in line with the consumption socialization theory (Ward, 1974), arguing that the media's role is particularly strong among the younger generation of consumers. Furthermore, consumer research asserts that famous media figures are often identified as role models for the young consumer market in forming its lifestyles and consumption patterns (Martin and Bush, 2000). Drawing on the theoretical perspective of consumer socialization (Ward, 1974), celebrities act as socialization agents in the socialization process of teenage consumers, and transmit norms, attitudes and motivations to the learner (Moschis and Churchill, 1978). This mirrors the view of the research participants in this study, who argue that celebrities become inspirational figures for generation Y consumers in the process of constructing millennial masculine identities, concerned with their physical appearance.

Consumer research explains teenagers' stronger receptivity to media influence as the matter of not fully developed identities (Bush, Martin and Bush, 2004). Similarly, in the emergent theory, maturity has been identified as the barrier to media's impact. "Positive reinforcement from outside individuals or media can reinforce preferences in deciding which behaviours, values, attitudes, and skills are appropriate for them in a

social context” (Bush, Martin and Bush, 2004, p. 111). Equally, as shown in the data gathered and analysed for this study, it can be seen that young male consumers employ the practices of celebrities in relation to body aestheticization – extensive grooming that can sometimes be perceived as vain and transcending prevalent hegemonic masculinity norms. For instance, it has been mentioned by the majority of male spa users that generation Y male consumers place a high emphasis on improving physical looks through exercising, grooming and the use of cosmetics. This is often the result of the influence of such Reality TV stars as those appearing on “Geordie Shore” contribute to forming a self-attentive masculinity.

The literature also reports that teenagers are easier targets for marketers because they are less concerned about the traditional social norms and ethics, and have been brought up in the culture of consumerism, thus, following the lead of the media (Bush, Martin and Bush, 2004). This links to the North East, where despite the strong perception of traditional masculine values, younger male consumers, as research participants assert, take the lead in adopting innovative consumption practices, which become essential in the creation of a new postmodern form of masculinity.

#### **6.4.1.3 Celebrity syndrome**

Advertising research has found that the media inspire the younger generation of consumers to be like celebrities (Choi and Rifon, 2007). Individuals conform to the lifestyle and behaviour of the celebrity to attain satisfaction with their own selves by attaining an image similar to that of the celebrity in question (Carlson and Donavan, 2008). This research offers a new understanding of the concept “celebrity syndrome”. The findings of the current research show that by advertising aesthetical body images the mass media promote the syndrome of celebrity. This does not necessarily mean attaining the actual image of the preferred famous figure but being in general concerned about one’s physical appearance and, hence, taking a more intensive care of the self through physical and body aesthetical activities. The concept of celebrity syndrome in this research context shows a general tendency within contemporary society to view physical appearance as the essence of self-construction.

To conclude, the range of developed theories and models that have been applied in the area of research into endorser’s influence over young consumer attitudes and the actual behaviour observed sheds light on the significance of the topic for knowledge transfer. The results obtained from various studies suggest that marketing and

advertising practitioners can continue applying the marketing strategy of celebrity endorsement due to its relevance and effectiveness.

As theoretical and empirical evidence shows, through various forms of advertising men are encouraged to embrace the role of consumers and combine it with their long-established status of producers (Firat, 1994). In Western societies men have primarily been associated with production due to their key role of breadwinning, practised in the public domain. With the relaxation of gender role prohibitions, men now can combine feminine and masculine modes by indulging and competing (Rohlinger, 2002). Competition and the power of choice have always played a crucial role in constructing masculine identities, whilst pleasing the self has explicitly been assigned to the female gender roles (Rohlinger, 2002). As a result of the shift in gender roles, through newly-embraced feminine consumption practices men have more possibilities to construct new male identities (Conseur, Hathcote and Kim, 2008; Firat, 1994). However, this task cannot be accomplished with ease due to another social force, operating in the North East of England. The conflicting influence of the media and of the sociocultural norms creates dissonance during the constructing process of masculinities in the wellbeing and beauty consumption market.

## **6.5 Dissonance**

In Chapter 5, it was outlined that social pressure, which derives from the two opposing social forces (sociocultural norms and the media), leaves male spa consumers in a state of dissonance. The concept of dissonance has emerged during the process of theory building and it reflects the male consumers' spa consumption patterns in the North East. The following subsections outline the scholarly debates around the concept of dissonance and present the similarities and differences in its application as it is currently understood in the literature and the proposed emergent grounded theory of social pressure derived from the interpretation of the male spa experiences.

### **6.5.1 Areas of theory application**

The theory of dissonance (Festinger, 1957) has been used as a framework mainly to discuss consumer behaviour (Gregory-Smith, Smith and Winkhofer, 2013; Powers and Jack, 2013; Sweeney, Hausknecht and Soutar, 2000); yet, the concept of dissonance has also been applied in sociology (Crymble, 2012) to show its influence in the construction of gender identities. Marketing scholars have looked into the relationship

between the cognitive dissonance and the frequency of product returns (Powers and Jack, 2013) to help retailers understand the underlying influences for bringing the products back. Cognitive dissonance has also been viewed as the motivator to implement strategies that could possibly diminish the unsatisfactory feeling after product acquisitions (Powers and Jack, 2013; Sweeney, Hausknecht and Soutar, 2000), which often leads to changed consumption patterns (i.e. non-ethical consumption might be replaced with the ethical consumption) (Gregory-Smith, Smith and Winkhofer, 2013).

Since the late 1950s, the theory of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) has also laid the foundation for the development of other theories, for example, that of gender identity dissonance (Crymble, 2012), which occurs when people commit to conflicting identities. Different identities are enacted due to changes in environmental and contextual settings as well as in personal preferences, and this social setting scenario creates emotional discomfort (Crymble, 2012). An unsettling feeling can also be experienced because of the inconsistency of the self-concept, which, as Crymble (2012) states, is a barely achievable task, due to a constant societal influence and changes in personal desires. The following section speaks about the changes in the dissonance concept since its original version, created by Festinger (1957).

### **6.5.2 The development of dissonance concept**

The originator of the cognitive dissonance theory, social psychologist Festinger (1957), described cognitive dissonance as a sense of psychological discomfort, which can also be related to anxiety, uncertainty, doubt (Montgomery and Barnes, 1993), disappointment, sadness, regret (Gregory-Smith, Smith and Winkhofer, 2013; Oliver, 1997; Powers and Jack, 2013), or even guilt (Dahl, Honea and Manchanda, 2003; Gregory-Smith, Smith and Winkhofer, 2013; McEachern *et al.* 2010). As explained by Festinger (1957), emotional distress is experienced due to inconsistency between the two cognitive elements, such as one's own understanding, feelings or desires and the perspective of the outer world. "Where an opinion must be formed or a decision taken, some dissonance is almost unavoidably created between the cognition of the action taken and those opinions or knowledge which tend to point to a different direction" (Festinger, 1957, p. 5).

Since its emergence, the theory of cognitive dissonance has been taken further by experimental social psychologists, who argued that dissonance occurs not necessarily

exclusively between the two inconsistent cognitions but rather includes a worry about undesirable or unknown consequences (Cooper and Fazio, 1984; Oliver, 1997). According to Cooper and Fazio (1984), behaving in a different way than it is expected often leads to unpleasant events. By combining Festinger's (1957) version of cognitive dissonance theory and the later notion of cognitive dissonance, it can be argued that unpleasant tension involves both cognitive and psychological aspects (Sweeney, Hausknecht and Soutar, 2000). Drawing on the original cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957) and the view of Sweeney, Hausknecht and Soutar (2000), the male spa users in the North East encounter both a sense of emotional discomfort and of cognitive discrepancy. The former type of distress causes fear and shame for being ridiculed and prejudiced allusions to one's non-heterosexuality. The latter marks the discrepancy between one's own attitudes and the socially agreed gender norms, which do not yet accept overt body aestheticization among men.

As the emergent theory argues, due to the presence of an unfavourable sociocultural climate for gendered-free consumption in the North East and possible unwelcome social outcomes, the male consumer segment in general tends to avoid spas or any other feminine spaces or products in order to prevent possible negative consequences. This is due to the exposure to risk of social punishment that follows the breach of normativity. As Cooper (2007) defines it, a punishment gives a negative feeling, discourages from performing a specific behaviour and, finally, reminds people of the need to avoid situations or stimuli that provoke the punishment. The punishment that spa consumers experience resonates with the potential unwelcome outcomes, outlined by Cooper (2007). It is a negative mundane reaction that derives from the people of close and more distant social circles (friends, teachers or relatives), which may disagree with the performed action of the subject (Cooper, 2007). In the male spa consumption context, the leisure preference for wellbeing and physical appearance improvement results in ridicule and allusion to homosexuality that come from both the close and distant social circle due to incompliance with the prevalent sociocultural norms.

Taking on the view of Cooper (2007) and Festinger (1957) that people do not tolerate inconsistencies, the theory of social pressure in the context of spa consumption can explain that coping with such differing influences or possible social penance is stressful and unnecessary burden for the contemporary manhood. The spa consumption patterns of the interviewed men reflect this attitude, given that the number of male spa attendees in the North East is considerably smaller in comparison to London. However,

the national survey suggests that in 2011 the UK nationals undertook 1 percent of day trips for beauty, health and spa purposes both in the North East and in London respectively (VisitEngland, 2012). Spa practices remain an unpopular leisure activity in the domestic UK market, and this increases the tension men experience when constructing their identities at health and beauty centres.

Crymble (2012) finds the mass media being directly responsible for creating confusion in the processes of constructing gender identities. Advertising, as a social institution, constructs, reflects and distorts psychological experiences of consumer identities at individual and societal levels (Crymble, 2012). According to Crymble (2012), “the mass media, and more specifically print magazine advertisements, are an essential locality for exploring the embodiment and management of identities, and how the process of identification is marked by conflicting desires and representations” (Crymble, 2012, p. 64). The concept of identity dissonance has been used to heighten the awareness of the conflict-ridden society (Crymble, 2012), and this resonates with the theory presented in this study. The emergent theory, derived from the interpretation of the male spa consumers’ experiences, argues that social pressure due to the conflicting impact of the two social forces (i.e. sociocultural norms and the media) contributes to the construction of a conflicted male gender identity, which will be discussed in section 6.8. The aim of the section below, however, is to provide an idea of how the concept of dissonance has developed in consumer research.

### **6.5.3 Cognitive dissonance in consumption**

The concept of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) has mainly been applied by consumer researchers in the post-purchase situations (Montgomery and Barnes, 1993; Gregory-Smith, Smith and Winkhofer, 2013; Sweeney, Hausknecht and Soutar, 2000). Nowadays, marketing scholars extend the application of the concept of “cognitive dissonance” and explain the unsettling feeling in the pre-purchasing stages of product evaluation (Chou, 2012; Koller and Salzberger, 2007) or the entire product acquisition process (Oliver, 1997). In line with Chou (2012) and Koller and Salzberger’s (2007) proposition of pre-purchase dissonance and Oliver’s (1997) argument that dissonance might be experienced over the entire decision-making process, this research suggests that in the spa consumption context male spa users in the North East experience cognitive dissonance before, during and after the purchasing process of spa services.



The male spa consumer's internal inconsistency in the decision process arises due to the divergent influence of the current social environment. To illustrate, male spa attendees encounter setbacks when looking for spa companions (Andrea, William and Samuel), when consuming spa services due to prudishness or intimacy (John, Andrea and Brian) and when sharing their experiences with others (John, Steven, Thomas, Samuel, Andrew and Ben). This resonates with Oliver's (1997) view that dissonance is integral both to decision-making and consumption.

Festinger (1957) suggests that dissonance can be eliminated by changing the behavioural cognitive element to make it constant with the lived environment. Nevertheless, this might be difficult to achieve, given that new dissonances might emerge while reducing or eliminating the initial dissonance (Festinger, 1957). Hence, the subject of emotional distress would often show strong tendencies not to be involved in unpleasant psychological states and will strive to avoid situations that could be the cause of the dissonance. For instance, in a consumption context uncomfortable emotions can be reduced by returning the product (Powers and Jack, 2013), shifting unethical consumption to ethical consumption (Gregory-Smith, Smith and Winkhofer, 2013) or changing the state of a consumer to that of a non-consumer (Matta, Patrick and MacInnis, 2005). The emergent theory suggests that in the context of male spa consumption, dissonance is managed by partly accepting the wellbeing and beauty services, hence, viewing them as by-products, or consuming them under specific conditions. Eliminating dissonance through the consumption strategies of by-product or primary product under specific conditions is the contribution that this social constructionist research makes to the theories of dissonance drawn upon. The theory of social pressure derived from a variety of male spa users' experiences suggests that dissonance can be reduced by employing a by-product type of consumption or a primary product type of consumption under specific conditions. The newly proposed dissonance-tackling strategies are discussed in sections 6.6 "By-product" and 6.7 "Primary product".

## **6.6 By-product**

The concept of a by-product has not been a popular source of discussion in scholarly work. Its use is virtually limited to research in the food industry, which has aimed to inform both empirically and theoretically about health related benefits that can be acquired from the consumption of by-products of fruit or vegetables (Alonso and O'Neill, 2012; Esquivel and Jiménez, 2012; Schieber, Stintzing and Carle, 2001) and

on the environmental issues that the disposal of by-products creates for the industries concerned (Esquivel and Jiménez, 2012; Schieber, Stintzing and Carle, 2001). Even in the same food sector, there is a paucity of studies on by-products and this explains why Schieber, Stintzing and Carle (2001) have been encouraged to bring more knowledge into the field of food by-products by calling for interdisciplinary research.

Recently, the terminology of by-product, albeit scarcely, has been witnessed outside the domain of the food industry with economics being the field of discussion around these types of products. For instance, this term has been applied to firms, which sell private goods and then use the acquired profits for public benefit. The by-product firms are industry associations or non-profit organisations. The former organisations sell services and use the resulting turnover in lobbying activities, while non-profit groups, for instance, charities, sell private goods (i.e. cookies, calendars, etc.) with the purpose of transforming the lives of those in need (Pecorino, 2013).

The review of the literature available on by-products suggests that the latter concept is new to consumer and marketing research. Although theoretical and empirical discussions took place in relation to additional products, this merchandise has been identified by scholarship as complementary (Mai, Yang and Chen, 2011; Yan and Bandyopadhyay, 2011), value-added products or augments (Kim, Huh and Knutson, 2010). For instance, in the study of spa consumers' intentions to visit a spa, Kim, Huh and Knutson (2010) describe spa services as augments to hotels and resorts whose purpose is to generate revenues for the businesses concerned.

The approach of the male respondents to spas in this study is in line with the view projected in the work of Kim, Huh and Knutson (2010). From the multiple perspectives of male spa visitors in the North East and the established academic knowledge, it can be concluded that wellness centres appear to play the role of supplements or by-products if they are run on the premises of a larger business, such as hotels or gyms. They are assets, whose purpose is to add value to the core product, making the latter more appealing to the end consumers. As the evidence shows, both the main businesses and their clients benefit from complementary services, if they are run alongside the core products with the principal businesses benefiting from increased sales, while their customers have an extended experience of a hotel stay or the use of gym facilities.

In marketing research it has been argued that companies providing core products gain functional advantage by introducing complementary products to their end consumers, especially if the latter ones are being purchased or used at the same time (Mai, Yang and Chen, 2011; Yan and Bandyopadhyay, 2011). The evidence suggests that product bundling can offer economies of scales and give the company additional marketing power (Wei, Zhao and Li, 2013; Yan and Bandyopadhyay, 2011). Among other benefits that complementary products bring are the improved value and performance of the main product, higher rated customer experience and satisfaction, as well as financial gain and popularity of the offered salient product or service (Bhaskaran and Gilbert, 2005, Mai, Yang and Chen, 2011). Additionally, it was found that benefits are reaped not only by the producers of core products but also by the companies that supply value-added products to the market. Complementary products that are usually purchased by consumers to gain the full utility of the products strengthen the performance of both firms (Mukhopadhyay, Yue, Zhu, 2011; Yue, Mukhopadhyay and Zhu, 2006).

The male spa users interviewed in this study admitted that their decision process when choosing a hotel is determined by the availability of spa services within the premises of the short-term accommodation in question. Extending the notion of profits, this business/customer relationship rewards both sides: the hotel business, as a primary product, benefits from higher-level occupancy of the rooms and popularity, while the male spa users are able to extend their holiday experience and obtain the most while travelling for leisure or work purposes.

The current study suggests that the application of the concept of by-product is a contribution to consumer research. The credibility of this input to knowledge is strong, knowing that the word by-product has not been used in this area of marketing. Additionally, the term “by-product” has been taken from one of the 14 semi-structured interviews; hence, its application is based on actual evidence. In conceptualising, names can be taken from the interpretation of the researcher during the comparative analysis or from the words of respondents (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). It is an advantage for the researcher, if participants provide in vivo concepts, since the latter can stimulate the analysis (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

Extending the theme of by-product contribution, the spa consumption patterns and experiences of male interviewees suggest that men in North East England consume spas primarily as an addition to other purchases – hotel stays and gym memberships.

Since the term derives from the practical world, thus it can be used to inform and advance theoretical knowledge. One definite conclusion in this study is that is possible to extend the application of the concept of by-product from the food industry and economics to the domain of marketing.

The purpose of the subsections that follow is to show what reasons drive men to use spas as an additional product to other purchases. In this study, they are seen to be escapism (i.e. escape from mundane reality, from stress and from physical stagnation), which will be discussed in relation to the existing literature, in the subsection provided below.

### **6.6.1 Escapism**

The reason to use spas for escapism in the emergent theory is assigned to the category of *spa - by-product*. The gym users admitted to seeking escapism from physical stagnation, while those staying in a hotel during their travels sought escape from stress and mundane reality. The findings in the extant body of literature support this.

#### **6.6.1.1 Escapism from physical stagnation**

Escapism from physical stagnation is a central reason reflected by the gym/spa users in this study. They utilise the spa/gym service to become fit and healthy. Men have been closely linked to sport with this being treated as one of the most masculine social institutions that assist men in constructing their hegemonic masculinities (Grindstaff and West, 2011). As Lee, Macdonald and Wright (2009) suggest, in Western cultures the construction of male identity is not imaginable without participation in sport or any other physical activity. Grinstaff and West (2011) explain men's dominance in sport as reflecting their desire to be strong and aggressive. Nevertheless, by engaging in sport men also gain character-building skills and develop courage, chivalry and even military patriotism (Næss, 2010). A mixture of exercising and relaxation activities in a gym and at a spa, as male spa-goers report, not only allows them to maintain their athletic appearance, which is similar to what sport sociologists convey (i.e. Næss, 2010), but also enhances their wellbeing, and this helps them construct a balanced-self.

## **Balanced-self**

The balanced-self is achieved by actively and passively participating in gym activities and spa services respectively. Since activity is closely associated with masculinity and passivity related to femininity, this type of engagement in a workout at a gym and relaxing at a spa helps male spa-goers restore the balance between their masculinity and femininity. The following subsections speak about these notions from the perspective of extant literature.

### **Balance between masculinity and femininity**

The extant body of literature is in line with the findings of this study. There is a tendency in the literature to relate activity to males (Ricciardelli, Clow and White, 2010) and passivity to females (Duquin, 1989; Foyster, 1998; Oh and Ardit, 2000; Schroeder and Zwick, 2004). It can be argued that through a mixture of active and passive participation in the gym/spa services, gym users achieve a balance between their masculinity and femininity. Scholars unanimously reflect societal understanding of the gender binary with passivity, along with inwardness and purity (Oh and Ardit, 2000), being traditionally attributed to femininity, while activeness, initiative and physical strength being assigned to the traits of masculinity (Levan and Pollack, 1995). Gender binary can be traced back to the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries when men were required to take control of their household and of women's sexuality (Foyster, 1999; Shepard, 2005). Even a century later, English didactic literature was teaching women to be chaste, silent and obedient (Foyster, 1999).

In contemporary times, the trend of the gender role binary continues to thrive as female models in magazines are eroticised (Duquin, 1989; Schroeder and Zwick, 2004) and depicted in stillness (Schroeder and Zwick, 2004; Duquin, 1989), for instance, sitting, lying or standing (Duquin, 1989), whilst males embody images of an active, decision-making, self-assured business-type man (Schroeder and Zwick, 2004). Drawing on the scholastic review of gender role representations, it can be concluded that the gym/spa users in the North East, by choosing to relax in spas after an intensive workout at the gym, find a balance between activity/masculinity and passivity/femininity. Since every individual possesses both masculine and feminine characteristics, with some being more dominant than others, relaxing at a spa helps contemporary men find their balanced-self.

The theory of balanced-self explains the behaviour of both heterosexual and homosexual male spa consumers and reflects the multiplicity of spa experiences. It can

be argued that both heterosexual and homosexual men, by engaging in gym/spa activities have an opportunity to maintain/enhance their masculinity and enhance/maintain their femininity depending on their sexual orientation. Such type of practices allows the heterosexual male consumers to maintain their masculinity through physical activity and awaken their femininity through passive relaxation at the spa. Knowing that homosexual consumers have a tendency to exhibit feminine traits and adopt feminine roles in their social lives, relaxing and beautifying spa activities maintain their femininity, whilst a work out at the gym increases the level of their masculinity.

The theory of balanced-self also supports and extends Mavin and Grandy's (2012, 2013) theory of doing gender well and differently. The latter theory posits that behaviour that is in line with the individual's sex category allows him/her to do his/her gender well. The simultaneously adopted behaviour, contradicting the individual's sex category, is perceived to be different to the one that is usually employed or expected to be employed. Therefore, such type of behaviour is identified as doing one's gender differently. Joining both postulates together a theory of doing gender well and differently emerges (Mavin and Grandy, 2012, 2013). The balanced-self theory proposed in this study is similar to the theory of doing gender well and differently (Mavin and Grandy, 2012, 2013). Male gym/spa users who exercise at the gym and then relax at a spa do their gender well and differently. They are being physically active at the gym and physically passive at a spa, thus in the first instance they do their gender well and in the second instance they do their gender differently since spa visits are typically associated with female but not male consumers. Yet, the only difference between these theories is that the theory of doing gender well and differently (Mavin and Grandy, 2012, 2013) cannot entirely fit the spa consumption context since the two opposing behaviours cannot be employed simultaneously. This is due to the provision of separate facilities that would not allow doing both practices at the same time. Therefore, the theory of balanced-self by drawing upon the theory of doing gender well and differently simultaneously (Mavin and Grandy, 2012, 2013) extends the latter in the context of spa consumption given that spa services are used following the activities at the gym. The following section provides insights into the notion of balance between mind and body.

### **Balance between mind and body**

The second factor, which helps achieve the balanced-self, is the balance between mind, body and spirit. The Greeks were the first to speak about the division between

mind and body, but French philosopher René Descartes was the one who systematically addressed this mind/body relationship. The mind-body dualism treats mind and body as separate and different from each other, hence, affecting each other mutually. However, the mind and body compartmentalisation has been criticised in post-modernity, which accepts the holistic approach that sees mind, body and also spirit as inextricably connected (Mueller and Kaufman, 2001; White, 2010). According to the philosophy of wellness, developed by Doctor Halbert Dunn in 1959, a human consists of body, mind and spirit and this correctly balanced unity leads to a state of wellbeing (Mueller and Kaufman, 2001). Hence, the harmony between mind, body and spirit leads to better health, or as the proposed theory of social pressure argues, to the balanced-self.

The benefits of the mind-body connection, as a balanced unity, have also been acknowledged in medicine (Kanitz, Camus and Seifert, 2013) and in education (Monnin, 2012). Mind-body therapies, including massages, help “elicit a state of relative freedom from mental and physical tension” (Kanitz, Camus and Seifert, 2013, p. S21). In the field of education, the integration of Olympism into the education system, combining a physical with an intellectual approach, is aimed at schoolchildren to help them find balance between mind and body and develop as individuals by acquiring other educational values of Olympism (the joy of effort, fair play, respect for others, the quest for excellence) (Monnin, 2012).

Drawing upon all views provided above and specifically upon the theory of unity between mind, body and spirit (Mueller and Kaufman, 2001; White, 2010), it can be further argued that the state of the balanced-self is achieved not only by maintaining/strengthening masculinity and enhancing/maintaining femininity depending on one’s sexual orientation. The balanced-self can also be achieved through a combination of physical exercise (which helps to release physical tension and become fit) and an ensuing massage or other therapies that are known to relax the mind and gain a stronger connection with spirit. This combination of techniques practiced in the contemporary British spas help men shift from imbalance to balance.

The next subsection introduces the concept of monosocial consumption, which men employ when seek escapism from physical stagnation in the British spas.

## **Monosocial consumption**

Monosocial consumption is a new term with the potential for enriching the understanding among researchers of how consumption is practiced in the consumer market. This concept was not used in the realms of scholarly knowledge in the past. It is therefore argued that this is an original contribution to academic marketing knowledge. The concept helps deepen the understanding of how consumer practices are carried out in today's world. The emergent theory suggests that spas can be consumed monosocially, which means that the spa experiences are acquired by one person. The analysis of data gathered showed that by consuming spas on their own, men seek to enhance their health and wellbeing, and achieve a more relaxed state while visiting spas to escape physical stagnation. Despite monosocial consumption being practiced by one person, it is still referred to as a type of social consumption, given that the spa services are being provided in a social environment.

The subsection below introduces the second theme of escapism found in the narratives of the male spa visitors. Escape from stress and mundane reality will be discussed together in relation to the available knowledge in consumer, spa and tourism research.

### **6.6.1.2 Escapism from mundane reality and stress**

Insight into consumer experiences, where the motive for escapism emerged, has been gained in consumer (Addis and Holbrook, 2010; Hirschman, 1983; Keng, Ting and Chen, 2011; Melancon, 2011; Verhagen *et al.* 2012; Xu, Turel and Yuan, 2012), spa and tourism research (Erfurt-Cooper and Cooper, 2009; Nilsen, 2013; Sheng and Chen, 2013). It is argued that consumers engage in hedonic activities to escape from their everyday reality (Hirschman, 1983). "Alienating experiences – such as those encountered at work or other unpleasant life experiences – put people in need of escaping" (Addis and Holbrook, 2010, p. 826).

Widely acknowledged as a hedonic motive having an entertainment value (Verhagen *et al.* 2012), escapism can also serve the utilitarian needs of the consumer when being immersed in the engaged activity, given that the latter can distance the consumer in question from everyday burdens (Hirschman, 1983) and release from stress and other pressures of life (Melancon, 2011). Highly associated with positive outcomes, escapism can also cause harm. For instance, escape to the world of virtual reality can enhance online game playing skills, but at the same time it leads to increased potential risk of technology addiction (Xu, Turel and Yuan, 2012).



Escapism is one of the central consumer experiences (Erfurt-Cooper and Cooper, 2009; Nilsen, 2013; Sheng and Chen, 2013). For instance, in the study by Sheng and Chen (2013), museum tourists in Taiwan look for escapism, which from the tourists' perspective can be achieved through the development of a suitable atmosphere, with the hint of illusion, of an unreal but attractive reality. Erfurt-Cooper and Cooper (2009) report that escapism is a way of enhancing wellbeing through relaxing, reviving and recharging therapies in a serene environment. Escape from stressful work and from the home environment is one of the main themes in the consumption of spa experiences. It appears that some spa customers deliberately use physical distance in order to escape from their everyday life (Nilsen, 2013), and this echoes the view of Hirschman (1983), who argued that escapism can be sought purposely to avoid unpleasantness or for coping with anxieties. This resonates with the current research findings where the interviewed men reported being interested in relaxation at spas for reasons of escape. Trips to spas are undertaken by men in the North East to escape from stress (due to work or other life responsibilities) or from mundane reality making this event as an unforgettable experience for them and their partners.

The discussions of the three motives (such as escapism involving escape from physical stagnation, from stress and from mundane reality) that drive men to consume spas as by-products show that the emergent theory findings are in accord with the available literature. This lends credibility to the analysis carried out by using Strauss and Corbin's (1998) version of grounded theory.

## **6.7 Primary product**

The concept of the primary product in the scholarly literature has often been used in parallel with the concept of the by-product, which has already been discussed in section 6.6. Hence, studies that explored the relationship between the primary products/services and their by-products are identical. Therefore, this information will not be repeated in this section, but new data and findings will be provided to explain the concept of a primary product. In addition, studies, in which the concept "primary product" has been mentioned before, primarily focused on the role of the secondary products rather than the core products, and, as a result, can add little knowledge to the actual term "primary product".

"Primary product" is not a new concept. In academic papers it is referred as a core product (Takagoshi and Matsubayashi, 2013), a focal or a base product (Mai, Yang

and Chen, 2011). This concept has been used in the research exploring the relationship between the primary network size and the sales of complementary products with the latter contributing towards increased profits and a higher demand for the primary products (Mai, Yang and Chen, 2011). In research into competition of product customization between branded firms, it was argued that by utilizing the advantage of the core products companies extend their product lines and gain a competitive advantage in the market (Takagoshi and Matsubayashi, 2013).

In addition, the concept “primary product” was discussed in relation to the product attributes, which can be primary and secondary. For example, it was established that the primary attributes of a product have a greater impact on customer satisfaction as often provide a solution to a specific problem, hence, contain necessary features. Conversely, the secondary attributes of a product have been viewed as less essential (Brechan, 2006). Although, it has been argued that the core product is fundamental in the market, nonetheless, additional aspects have been equally recognized for their value-added effect, and thus, additional products received a greater deal of attention in the available literature than the discussion of the primary products (see section 6.6). Taking this into account, the sections followed will concentrate on the findings of the study carried out and will speak in detail about the conditions, which determine the possibility for using spas as primary products by men in the North East region.

The emergent theory suggests that these conditions are heterosocial, homosocial and a type of a spa. They determine how spas are socially consumed by men in the North East and what companions are selected for spa visits. Each of these conditions will be discussed in the following paragraphs, which will outline similarities and differences between the established knowledge and the emergent theory.

### **6.7.1 Heterosocial consumption**

The concept of dissonance, presented in section 6.5, determines the way spas are consumed in the region of the North East. Heterosocial consumption is one of the consumption forms that are employed by the male spa goers in this part of the country. It appears to be the most preferred way of consuming wellbeing services at spas by men. The men’s shared spa experiences reveal that female partners are their main confidantes while searching for wellness and pleasure in spas in this part of the country.

The term “heterosociality” describes social relations between the opposite sexes. It has received little attention and has been found only in sociology. For instance, heterosociality has been explored in women’s studies where it was identified as a threat to men’s heterosexuality (Flood, 2003). According to Flood (2003), close but not intimate relationships with women lead to homosexualisation and feminisation of men, but at the same time they serve as a strategy to create heterosexual friendships and relationships.

Insights into heterosocial relationships have also been sought by researchers who looked into the social development of youth and adolescents (Furman and Buhrmester, 1992; Furman and Wehner, 1997; Grover and Nangle, 2003). They argue that romantic partners play the role of support in heterosocial interactions and their impact is more appreciated than other social networks (Furman and Buhrmester, 1992; Furman and Wehner, 1997). Romantic peers often provide emotional comfort and strength in distress, and become companions and friends in the construction of romantic relationships (Furman and Wehner, 1997). The results of this study are closely linked to the existing knowledge since the romantic heterosociality was expressed as the most commonly practiced type of consumption in the British spas in the North East. Heterosexual male spa goers reported often going to spas with their wives or partners to escape from stress and mundane reality. In both cases, the male spa users sought relaxation that was needed due to pressure at work and the necessity to improve their relationships with the better half.

The review of the available literature on heterosociality or heterosocial relationships shows that the romantic or sexual aspect is not excluded in the conceptualisations mentioned. This is also the case in this study, given that the female spa companions are romantically connected to the male spa visitors interviewed. Furthermore, by spending time together in spas couples have a tendency to bring more romanticism into their relationships. Bearing this in mind, this research proposes the introduction of a new term into the scholastic domain, namely that of romantic heterosocial consumption. It is an original contribution to marketing and consumer research, given that this consumption type has never been identified before. The following section proposes another original concept, that of homosocial consumption, which is a contribution to the field of marketing and consumer research.

## **6.7.2 Homosocial consumption**

In the proposed theory of social pressure homosocial consumption emerged as another type of consumption that men engage in when visiting spas for primary reasons. These are the escape from the mundane reality sought for fun and pampering purposes in the company of other males, the escape from stress and the intention to improve one's health and wellbeing. Although homosocial consumption does not appear to be the most popular type of consumption among men, men can still consider inviting other males to join them for a spa treat. Nevertheless, this, as outlined in Chapter 5, happens under specific conditions.

Homosociality in spas can take place if, firstly, a friendly relationship exists between the spa user and his prospective male spa companion, and, secondly, if there is a commonality between them in terms of sexual orientation and an interest in going to spas. The third condition is the type of spas visited, which appear to be the Turkish baths. The following subsection will discuss the mentioned conditions along with the theme of homosociality while aiming to reveal the linkage of the emergent theory with the extant theoretical knowledge.

### **6.7.2.1 Definition of homosociality and its application**

The term homosociality, introduced by Lipman-Blumen (1976), defines intentional interaction in seeking enjoyment in the company of the same sex, however, this does not involve eroticism, and for this reason the term differs from the concept of homosexuality. In relation to men, this concept rests on the view that males are interested in and are stimulated by other men from early childhood, and this appreciation of male company continues to be practiced in various social institutions throughout the entire life of a man (Lipman-Blumen, 1976).

Since the late 1970s, the notion of homosociality has been further adopted in studies although not often. The evidence of this practice is limited only to gender and organisation research (Broadbridge and Hearn, 2008; Holgersson, 2013; Mavin and Williams, 2013; Mavin *et al.* 2013) and sociology (Kiesling, 2005; Milne-Smith, 2011). Within management and organisation studies, a strong notion of gender inequality persists in relation to homosociality, which happens to undermine not only women but also other males who are subordinated (Broadbridge and Hearn, 2008). In particular, homosociality contributes to problematising women's career opportunities and positive

female inter-gender relationships at work (Mavin and Williams, 2013). Scholars unanimously agree that homosocial male interactions work in cooperation with hegemonic masculinity to build and maintain men's power in organisations (Broadbridge and Hearn's, 2008; Mavin *et al.* 2013) and contributes to the reproduction of gender segregation in occupations (Holgersson, 2013; Mavin *et al.* 2013). In the context of senior management recruitment, homosociality is practiced by (re)defining competence that is highly associated with men and masculinity and by undertaking hierarchy (Holgersson, 2013). The former practice is recorded in the selection criteria of candidates with males being more appreciated than their female counterparts, while hierarchy is used in employing younger candidates. Similarly, the review of management research, carried out by Broadbridge and Hearn (2008), reflects homosociality playing a key role in organisational management. This is evidenced by a strong preference for men and the company of men within management, not excluding the implementation of masculine models, stereotypes and symbols in the management process within organisations (Broadbridge and Hearn, 2008).

#### **6.7.2.2 Contribution to knowledge**

The scarce evidence of the use of the term in academic research shows that the concept of homosociality is underdeveloped (Holgersson, 2013). This research supports Holgersson's (2013) view and contributes to knowledge by bringing new insight into the conceptualisation of homosociality to show its diversity. Firstly, contrary to what is the case in an organisational context, homosociality plays a different role in the field of spa consumption. If on the organisational level homosociality is appreciated and, in fact, is always deliberately sought by men in order to maintain male power, in the spa consumption context it is less valued and less often practiced, given that the mentioned business is closely associated with female consumers.

Homosociality is context specific. It is the context that determines whether homosociality will be practiced and appreciated among men. By suggesting to view and analyse homosociality in this way, this thesis makes a contribution to knowledge. It has been reported that in a work setting men seek male companionship to gain greater access to financial resources and better career perspectives (Durbin, 2011; Fisher and Kinsey, 2014; Holgersson, 2013). Yet, within spas, homosociality does not operate in the same way. Male socialisation in spas can be viewed not only as an unconventional act since practices that are considered feminine question men's heteronormativity. Thus, the intention of the male customer to seek relaxation or other wellbeing benefits

in the company of another man can be perceived as being homosexual. The research participants of this study acknowledged that asking another male to spend their leisure at a spa would not only be unconventional but also questionable.

According to the interviewed male spa users, visiting a spa in a group of other males is also problematic due to the same conditions, which are gendered preferences for leisure practices. Therefore, attending spas for a group of males is also hardly seen or imaginable, except in sport settings. The literature also highlights the same tendency. Homosociality is a legitimate form of social consumption only in the context of sports games and sports activities (de Visser, Smith and McDonnell, 2009; McDowell, 2005). Men are used to group interactions and this explains why Turkish baths are chosen when they go with male friends for wellness purposes. This type of facility is more suitable for male homosocial relationships due to the availability of male-only days. Other types of spa are more luxurious, thus more feminine and possibly less desirable for the male.

To explain why homosociality among men is not operating in spas as widely as it is in the sport or work contexts, it is worth looking at the regional sociocultural environment. The data gathered revealed that men are exposed to social pressure to behave according to the sociocultural norms. They operate in the North East region as restricting male socialisation outside the boundaries of male stereotypical activities. Historical conditions outweigh the developments in gender practices given the industrial origin of this region where masculinities have been socially constructed predominantly in a work sphere. Female gender roles, on the other hand, used to be embodied in the home environment. Such gender binary in consumption continues to limit men's options for other activities to be embraced as legitimate male practices.

It is also important to analyse how homosocialisation or homosocial consumption works within the geographies of gender and whether it is similarly practiced among heterosexual males and homosexuals males. Firstly, within gender categories homosociality is employed and perceived differently by women and men. Socialisation within female intra-gender has never been perceived problematic. This is due to gender stereotypes that influence how gender is done or supposed to be done. The psychology literature highlights that the behaviour of women and men is approved if it matches the prescribed roles. According to the role congruity theory (Eagly and Diekmann, 2005), women are good for communal and relational roles, whilst men are expected to be agentic, thus appreciating independence and taking the leading roles

(Eagly and Diekman, 2005). Therefore, it can be argued that socialisation is more natural and approved for women, whereas for men it is hardly imaginable unless it is practiced in specific social contexts, such as work, sport and pub environment. Male intra-gender socialisation works only in masculine spaces. Cross-gender behaviour is always problematic because it goes against male prescriptive roles. Therefore, homosocialisation in a feminine environment is perceived to be non-heteronormative and questioning one's sexual orientation.

Sexual orientation is the foremost criteria that makes homosocialisation among male spa-goers possible, yet it is more acceptable and appreciated among the homosexual men rather than the heterosexual men. Homosexual men can do their gender differently (Mavin and Grandy, 2012, 2013) by undertaking feminine behaviours or by visiting feminine gender spaces. This behaviour is perceived to be normative and acceptable in the spa consumption context. In this study, homosexual men confirmed consuming spa services homosocially be the latter type of consumption employed with a male partner or a male friend. Entering a spa space with another male does not threaten their homosexual normativity as it does with the heterosexual men. Male intra-gender socialisation among homosexuals is allowed and perceived to be normative since the homosexual men's behaviour is not being influenced and predetermined by heteronormativity. Therefore, within this sexual category there are no boundaries that are in effect among the heterosexual men and, therefore, men are allowed without prejudice to change their behaviours if they chose to do so. It means that they can easily employ masculine and feminine practices within their sexual category. Yet, it is less conventional for heterosexual men to intermix femininity and masculinity because of the heteronormativity effect that pressurises men within this sexual category.

Nevertheless, there is evidence to suggest that the homosocial type of consumption takes place in spas in the North East. This term contributes to consumer behaviour and marketing research, given that this field of scholarship has never employed this concept before. Homosocial spa consumption is mainly based on familiarity with the other person. A friendly relationship and commonality appear to be the main criteria in the selection of male spa companions. This links to the view expressed in sociological studies. Male networking, according to Milne-Smith (2011), is based on the parties having similar interests, activities and the view of life. These were the similarities that bonded members of gentlemen's clubs in Victorian times, and men's social bonds continue to be formed on the same basis among men today. Both heterosexual and homosexual men select their prospective male spa companions on the basis of a

shared interest in wellbeing and a shared sexual orientation. By expressing a preference for homosocial bonding with other males of the same sexual orientation, the male spa users practice discrimination when making decisions about spa consumption, and it is the only form of discrimination that was found when carrying out the analysis of the data gathered.

Although homosociality among male friends can be practised in spas, it has not earned full acceptance among heterosexual and homosexual men. This is due to the fear of social stigma, which can possibly be a threat to the heterosexual men's heteronormativity. Social stigma has a negative impact also on homosexual males whose gay identities become more exposed. Since modern British spas in the minds of men and the whole contemporary society remain the luxurious products for female's indulgence, constructing masculinities in the social premises of the businesses of wellbeing comes with friction. Furthermore, knowing that it is hard for both heterosexual and homosexual men to find potential male companions in their search for wellness and indulgence in contemporary spas, alongside other previously mentioned negative factors or conditions (such as strong sociocultural norms whose breach results in stigma) men do experience some degree of conflict when constructing their masculinities in spas in the North East. The next chapter will look at this in more detail.

## **6.8 Conflicted masculinities**

Since the 1980s, when the term hegemonic masculinity emerged, scholars (mainly from the field of sociology) have proposed other versions of masculinity, thus marking its multiplicity. Researchers have been engaged in bringing new conceptualisations of masculinity into the scholarly knowledge, such as an inclusive masculinity (Anderson, 2009) or other alternative masculinities embodied by the New Man (Craig, 1993) or metrosexuals (Simpson, 1994, 2002; 2004). The diversity of terms suggests that manliness is not a stable entity but rather changing and fluid (Haywood and Mac an Ghaill, 2003) because it is socially constructed in everyday practices. Thus, it evolves in new ways and forms that show the multiplicity of this cultural dimension (Hofstede and Bond, 1984).

The variety of terminology shows that the concept of masculinity is evolving. In the view of masculinity scholarship, masculinity has a tendency to change depending on time and cultural settings in which it is being constructed. Since over time culture



develops and embraces new preferences for social order, so preferences for masculinity change with some qualities in men being more appreciated than others. If in the past, the macho behaviour model was seen as a norm, in contemporary times it is being less valued. In fact, physical prowess, dominance and aggressiveness are not so much desirable in contemporary masculinities with men showing a greater tendency to embrace qualities often attributed to the opposite sex.

Masculinity is closely attached to the male sex category and, therefore, it is perceived as a set of characteristics and behaviours that are appropriate for men. Messerschmidt (2009) defines masculinity as a type of gender behaviour that is constructed during men's social interactions. In other words, this social construction is collated to the sex category and their congruency determines the appropriateness of male social practices. If gender behaviour goes against social expectations of a male sex category, the behaviour is then interpreted as feminine. Such examples have also been recorded during the interviews with male spa users, whose practices were interpreted by them and others as feminine. Male spa users' perspectives reveal that male body care in spas does not match the sociocultural expectations for men and, therefore, is perceived as non-masculine and less acceptable. Doing gender in a feminine way leads men towards social stigmatisation in the form of ridicule and association with gay men.

Masculinity is closely linked to a sexual orientation. According to McCormack (2012), heterosexuality and masculinity are collated and synonymous. Heterosexual masculinity is thus often perceived as natural and morally right. It means that behaviour socially constructed by heterosexual men is more esteemed than that constructed by homosexual, bisexual or transgender men. The latter types of masculinity are devalued. As it has been proposed in the hegemonic masculinity theory (Connell, 1995; 2000), non-hegemonic masculinities take a lower position in men's social relations and are often treated as subordinated or marginalised. Therefore, sexuality along race and social class also determines men's behaviour and their position in the male social hierarchy. The adopted heteronormative behaviour grants men power over women and other men. Thus, men constantly seek to prove their heterosexuality in order to contest the respected hegemonic masculinity. In this way, masculinity is understood as the outcome of gender relations. It is not only constructed in relation to women but also in relation to other men.

In the 1980s, psychological research identified masculinity as a complex and problematic construct (Levant and Pollack, 1995). This field of scholarship provided a framework, which questioned traditional male roles, often focused on competition, toughness, status and emotional stoicism and predicted some male problems (misogyny, homophobia, aggression, violence and neglect to health) as the after effects of male gender role socialisation (Levant and Pollack, 1995). In the past men were brought up with the values of traditional masculinity by firstly being the breadwinners, possessing physical and emotional strength and avoiding anything that would take them closer to femininity.

Nevertheless, in the last decade of the twentieth century, traditional masculinity began to collapse as men were expected to embark on the activities that were alien to them, for example, parenting and nurturing or better expressing their feelings that often resulted in low self-esteem and uncertainty about the means of being a man (Levant, 1995). It can be argued that the crisis of masculinity continues even in the twenty-first century as men are more than ever forced to breach the traditional male code and add new qualities (i.e. nurturing, parenting and self-attentiveness) into their identities. Although men are expected to comply with sociocultural norms and do their gender in a way which is perceived as appropriate for their sex category, they are also expected to be innovative and embrace new and more diverse ways of constructing their gender. The incongruence in expectations marks conflict within the contemporary masculinities, which, as a result, can be called conflicted. This contribution will be discussed in the following section.

### **6.8.1 “Conflicted masculinities” and theories of conflict**

To date, the evidence for using the notion of conflict in gender research is less apparent, and this shows the newness of the concept and its potential for further development. The concept that this doctoral study brings into the realms of gender and consumer research is “conflicted masculinities.” In the emergent grounded theory of social pressure, which has been derived from the narratives of the male participants interviewed, this term plays the role of the consequence or an outcome of the male spa users’ experiences when purchasing various spa services or cosmetics to meet hedonic and practical needs. The term, which has been introduced at the final stage of the data analysis, offers a new insight into the issues which contemporary men face when encountering dissonance due to the clash of sociocultural and media influences.

As a result, it is possible to argue that the opposing impacts of the aforementioned social conditions induce a conflict in men of this study.

The conceptualisation of conflicted masculinity has never been proposed in consumer and gender research, although the word “conflict” is not new at least in the realms of sociology. To illustrate, the theory of conflict has been applied to signify the transcendence from gender norms in those wishing that they belonged to a different gender (Ålgars, Santtila and Sandnabba, 2010). “People with gender identity disorder have a conflicted gender identity,” which arises due to a discrepancy between the biological sex and the desirable gender (Ålgars, Santtila and Sandnabba, 2010, p. 118). Furthermore, theorists of masculinity have spoken about conflicted behaviour among men when socially constructing their male identities in public and private spheres of life (Simpkins, 1996). Almost two decades ago, the conflicted behaviour among men was attributed to the gender role conflict (Levant and Pollack, 1995; O’Neil, 1981; Pleck, 1995).

The conflict that is described in the theory of gender role conflict (Levant and Pollack, 1995; O’Neil, 1981; Pleck, 1995) and the proposed theory of conflicted masculinities, appear to be similar, nevertheless they also differ in significant ways. O’Neil (1981) explained the gender role conflict as an outcome of gender role socialisation. According to him, restrictive and rigid gender roles constrain individuals from expressing their individuality and because of this, individuals have to choose to either comply with the restrictive gender norms or reject them. In the first case, the expected behaviour is reinforced in the self and others and sometimes, in extreme scenarios, the compliant individual devaluates those who deviate from traditional gender roles. While when the prevalent gender roles are rejected, a clear expression of one’s individuality often results in being devalued by others. This means that negative consequences follow afterwards, making an impact on the person’s psychological and physical wellbeing, for instance, leading to low self-esteem, anxiety and even depression (O’Neil, 1981).

The dilemma of conflict has also been mentioned in the context of the implementation of organisational change (Murgia and Poggio, 2013) when individuals have the choice of conforming to inevitable changes or hinder them through the practices of resistance. In addition, Næss (2010) briefly mentioned the high possibility of a young male individual having multiple and conflicting identities, which can alter in relation to sociocultural and historical changes. While hegemonic masculinity proves to be the

most popular, it may cause some tension in men with some males distancing from it (Næss, 2010).

### **6.8.2 Contribution to knowledge**

Similarly, in the context of spa consumption, men's decisions for purchasing spa services do not always receive assent from other men given that the very concepts of spas and spa treatments have connotations of femininity. Thus, men often opt not to use spas in the North East, only reluctantly reveal their spa experiences to their friends or choose such experiences only as by-products or as primary products, but then only under specific conditions, which have been outlined in sections 6.6 and 6.7.

The way in which the theory of conflicted masculinity differs from the theory of gender role conflict is that the emotional struggle arises not from a single source, as in the case of gender role conflict, but from the two social influences that have an opposing impact on the individual – the pulling backwards and the pushing forwards factors. As an example, the sociocultural norms in this part of the country tend to pull men back to the traditional normative behaviour, while the media, on the contrary, encourages men to adopt new ways of being a man, and thus, pushes towards the self-attentiveness or, in other words, towards achieving an attractive image of the self by consuming cosmetics and services of beauty and wellbeing at spas.

Furthermore, dissimilarity between the two theories is seen in the number and the kind of sources. If in the gender role conflict the struggle occurs due to the clash of an inner desire and an external social influence, in the context of spa consumption the influence comes from two external sources – the media and the sociocultural norms. The interaction between the two social forces creates a conflict, which in the marketing literature is described as dissonance. In this case, masculinities are constructed in the conflicted environment where traditionalism and novelty meet.

In accordance with the emergent theory, Garst and Bodenhausen (1997) have argued that advertising is one of the mass media sources, which actively shapes the performances of men and informs about the new ways of behaviour for men (Garst and Bodenhausen, 1997). Nevertheless, it appears that men with more traditional attitudes are less susceptible to new presentations of male images found in the media (Garst and Bodenhausen, 1997). Hence, it can be argued that men, who completely or partly reject spa services, where these are offered in combination with a beauty treatment

and the application of cosmetics, support and embody a traditional perception of masculinity.

Taking the view of Garst and Bodenhausen (1997), male identities that are socially constructed through traditional male gender values, embrace an inflexible approach to innovation, and this social approach causes them to refuse anything that contradicts the hegemonic perception of appropriate masculine behaviour. Such behaviour can be explained as exercising the free will to conform to the hegemonic masculine ideals in order to stay in secure social relationships rather than choosing to challenge the deeply established sociocultural norms and, as Dunlap and Johnson (2013) state, face the dilemma of difference or conflict, as the emergent theory suggests.

The term conflicted masculinities marks the conflict that men face when constructing their gender before, during or after the spa consumption process. This concept can be applied to men of all social and sexual backgrounds. The interviewed male spa users, as their demographic distribution shows, formed a diverse sample of research participants. Their age varied from the early twenties up to early sixties. The taken work positions, starting from the simple workforce to managing directors, as well as their sexualities, ranging from heterosexual to homosexual, convey men's diversity and the multiplicity of the concept of masculinity. Yet, their shared spa experiences involved some level of conflict despite the type of masculinity being embodied. Younger and older, heterosexual and homosexual male consumers face similar issues when entering spa spaces in the North East because these spaces are closely linked to female clientele.

Although this research agrees with the rest of the gender scholarship that masculinities are social constructions that emerge from and develop during social interactions with men and women, it is important to acknowledge the impact of social space on the formation of gender relations. Therefore, this research incorporates the impact of space on gender constructions to explain why contemporary masculinities constructed in spas are conflicted. Van Ingen (2003), by drawing on the work of French theorist Lefebvre, reminds us that social practices create social spaces. Having this in mind, it can be argued that social spatiality also shapes social relations and social identities. It means that masculinities and femininities are constructed through and in social spaces by those who attend these spaces.

Spas, as the participants of this research have acknowledged, are gendered spaces. They are predominantly created by female consumers, who frequent these places for relaxation and social enjoyment. The discourse of spas being a feminine location where femininities are formed and maintained ran throughout all interviews. Women's appreciation of spa sites and the use of them as spaces for femininity constructions contribute towards a spa being understood as "conceived space" in the terminology of Lefebvre (Van Inge, 2003). The term "conceived space" or "representations of space" means that spaces are the representations of ideas and thoughts that operate within a specific geographical location. This applies to the North East of England where spas are perceived as feminine localities, thus less appropriate for men's leisure due to incongruence between their adopted behaviour and the expectations placed on the male sex category.

Similarly, other Lefebvre's terms, such as "perceived space" or spatial practices and "lived space" or "spaces of representation" can also be applied to spas. Perceived space or spacial practice refers to practices that occur during social process in a specific location through the body as a medium (Van Inge, 2003). In the spa consumption context, the majority of the men visit spas after their fitness activities at the gym and consume spas as by-products in their leisure. "Lived space", however, "is the site of discriminatory practices such as racism, sexism and homophobia and is where marginalisation is produced and enforced" (Van Inge, 2003, p. 204). Spas can be identified as "lived spaces" because here men struggle to enjoy spa services due to homophobia and marginalisation that follows after. By being singled out as a handful of male consumers among female clientele in spas, the interviewed men become exposed to social judgement that criticises their masculinity, questions their heteronormativity and stigmatises their sexual orientation. Due to these reasons, the men admitted feeling uncomfortable using spas. The actual consumption or contemplation to purchase spa packages is filled with tension making spa spaces unappealing and undesirable for male consumers.

Since men are rare guests at spas, their constructions of masculinity speak about tension and conflict, which arise due to their contradicting performances. Men are expected to do their gender well, which means according to their sex category (Mavin and Grandy, 2012, 2013). However, spaces conceived and lived as feminine, make this process more complicated, since men do not meet heteronormative expectations. This shows that masculinity is closely collated to heterosexuality, confirming Connell's (1995; 2000) and McCormack's (2012) view that masculinities other than hegemonic

masculinity are less esteemed. The proposed concept “conflicted masculinities” equally applies to those masculinities, which break heteronormative expectations and to those, which are embodied by homosexual males. They are being devalued due to connotations of femininity and homosexuality that spas hold.

Consuming spa services downgrades men’s position in their social relations due to social stigma being applied for feminine actions. This is in line with the theory of lived space, proposed by Lefebvre. He saw spaces as producing and maintaining power relations (Van Ingen, 2003). A lower position in the male social hierarchy makes men (re)construct their masculinity to the individually and socially desirable type of masculinity that is heterosexual and hegemonic. This is usually achieved by consuming spa services as by-products of other purchases, for example, a gym membership or a stay at a hotel for work reasons or leisure because this way of performing one’s masculinity is perceived safe by men. Another way of (re)constructing one’s gender is to choose the appropriate spa companions for diminishing possible preconceptions. For instance, heterosexual men avoid spa spaces or visit them heterosocially with their female partners. In the case of homosexual male spa consumers, their masculinity is usually performed either homosocially with men of the same sexual orientation to avoid direct stigmatisation, or monosocially to avoid misconception that visits to spas are undertaken for sex reasons. Both heterosexual and homosexual men construct their masculinities by striving to reduce the level of conflict, and this is usually achieved by masking femininity and keeping their spa visits as a secret from their close and distant social circles.

By applying Lefebvre’s theory of spatiality to explain the proposed concept of “conflicted masculinities” and by interpreting spas as perceived, conceived and lived spaces, this research contributes to consumer research with the view that consumer spaces are not neutral but gendered. Consumption spaces reflect social relations where masculinities and femininities are formed and maintained. In the spa consumption context, men construct their masculinities in relation to women and other men, and contest their power position through the socially constructed differences. The results obtained from the lived male spa consumers’ experiences reflect the social constructionist nature of this project. The interpretive analysis, in line with the established knowledge, reveals that men construct their masculinities and consumer identities socially and in relation to other people. It also speaks about the positionality achieved within the social consumption order. The male spa consumers construct conflicted masculinities due to the feminised spa spaces and homophobia, and are

forced to (re)construct their masculinities into the desirable or socially safe models through the chosen types of consumption.

## **6.9 Summary**

The present chapter outlined the similarities and differences of the developed theory of social pressure with the available body of literature in order to bring more insights into the conceptualisations of masculinity and consumer research while exploring the male spa users' experiences in the North East of England. The comparison of the emergent theory with the already established knowledge is an essential part of the theory building process in the grounded theory studies. This process helps to validate and refine the derived theoretical findings. The comparing act of the components of the emerged theory (i.e. social pressure, derived from the influencing conditions of sociocultural norms and the media, the conceptualisations of by-product and primary product as well as homosociality, dissonance and conflict) with the extant literature from the various fields of research provided more insight into the mentioned concepts and their application. In addition, the comparison of practical and theoretical findings gave an opportunity to gain a better understanding of the issues contemporary men face when consuming spas in the North East region. The final chapter addresses the conclusions reached while undertaking this study and contributions of this thesis to theory and practice.



# Chapter 7: Conclusions, contributions and future research

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## 7.1 Overview of chapter

The preceding chapter presented the emergent theory within the broad extant literature. The theory derived from the analysis of male spa users' motives and experiences was compared with the relevant literature for validation purposes and for establishing the points where the available body of knowledge could be extended or refined further. More specifically, by outlining similarities and differences between the developed theory of social pressure and the available body of literature, the previous chapter provided a deeper insight into the spa consumption trends prevalent among male consumers in the North East. In addition, this procedure was also required for identifying the areas of contribution, which the study will make.

The final chapter summarises the whole research by revisiting the research question and objectives, in order to show how they have been met in this study. It then provides the conclusions and contributions reached on the completion of this PhD project. The latter section of the chapter begins with the key concluding points. Then the contribution to knowledge is outlined and is followed by methodological contributions, as well as practical suggestions for the spa, wellbeing and beauty industries. Finally, the last section of the chapter specifies the limitations of this study and what future research is required to enrich knowledge about consumer behaviour.

## 7.2 Conclusions

### 7.2.1 A brief summary of the thesis

This section briefly summarises the thesis by revisiting its main question and objectives. The PhD study set out to explore the male spa consumer behaviour in the North East of England by exploring men's consumption patterns through the lens of gender. Following the path initiated by a handful of consumer behaviour scholars (Bettany *et al.* 2010; Costa, 1994a,b; Martens, 2009; Tuncay, 2006), this research aimed to bring more knowledge and evidence into consumer research by arguing that gender and consumer behaviour are closely interlinked. For this reason, the study was conducted to answer the main question:

How do current perceptions of masculinity influence the UK male spa customers' motives to engage in practices enhancing one's physical appearance and wellbeing?

This was achieved by investigating:

- The aspects of masculinity from the male research participants' point of view ;
- The key purchasing motives of the male spa customers for aesthetic and wellbeing services.

Six objectives were set out to assist in answering the main research question. They are listed in Table 7.1 below. It also specifies the chapters where these objectives have been met.

**Table 7.1:** Research objectives and related chapters

Research objectives	Chapter
To present postmodern conceptual underpinnings of masculinity from consumer behaviour and gender literature	Chapter 2
To select a methodology, which reflects the researcher's ontological and epistemological views, including the overall research theoretical perspective and provide an insight into the motives of research participants for spa services, enhancing physical appearance and wellbeing	Chapter 3
To provide the contemporary ideals of masculinity from the male research participants' perspectives, collected in spas in the North East of England	Chapters 4, 5 and 6
To utilise appropriate methodological tools to collect and analyse data, addressing research question	Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6
To develop a theory, concerning the evolving male spa segment and its consumption habits in order to enable spa and beauty businesses to create adequate services, meeting the requirements of the male market segment	Chapters 4, 5 and 6

The postmodern conceptualisations of masculinity have been listed in **Chapter 2** with the intention to explain the concept of masculinity and the main theories proposed

since the 1970s before commencing the data collection. This was a necessary step in order to give a background to the existing body of knowledge. At the same time this objective served as a basis for establishing the contribution of this research.

Masculine ideals and men's decisions for engaging in wellbeing and beauty practices at a spa have been gathered by adopting a qualitative research design. **Chapter 3** introduced interpretivism and symbolic interactionism as the philosophical underpinnings of this study, and social constructionism as the epistemological standpoint of the researcher. The methodology of grounded theory was selected to conduct data for the current project.

The participants' perspectives on the current masculine values were reflected in **Chapters 4, 5 and 6**. Empirical findings are in line with the established knowledge, showing that the model of hegemonic masculinity appears to be the most popular one across the North East, as it is in other parts of the world.

The process of data collection and analysis has been discussed in **Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6**. Semi-structured interviews were identified as a tool for data collection (**Chapter 3**). The data gathered was analysed by adopting a grounded theory approach developed by Strauss and Corbin (1998) (**Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6**), with memos serving as an additional aid for theory development (**Chapter 3, 4, 5 and 6**).

The final objective was met in **Chapters 5 and 6**. Social pressure was identified as a phenomenon influencing the purchasing decisions of the current male spa clientele in the North East of England. It was introduced in **Chapter 5** and then compared with the extant body of literature in **Chapter 6**. This theory was developed for theoretical and practical purposes. Firstly, it will advance the consumer behaviour and gender fields with new concepts proposed. Secondly, it will assist the regional spa business developers for establishing services matching the requirements of male consumers.

The key findings as well as theoretical and practical contributions of this PhD study can now be presented in the sections that follow.

### **7.2.2 Summary of key research findings**

The literature review showed that consumer research into gender influence on consumption is limited. Studies exploring male consumption practices closely related to

female consumers are predominantly of a sociological nature. This project responded to the call for more knowledge in the field of consumer behaviour and provided insight in the form of grounded theory. At this point, the study met its objective and developed a substantive theory, specific to the industry of the spa, as the provider of beauty and wellbeing packages required by both female and male customers today.

The study set out to explore the purchasing behaviour of the male spa visitors through the lens of gender, aiming to bring more insight into the significance of gender impact, on the way spa services are consumed by men today. The initial reading of scholarly knowledge, published in the field of gender and consumer behaviour, suggested that consumer practices could possibly be shaped by the influence of sociocultural norms (Costa, 1994a, b; Firat, 1994). Little evidence of the coherence between gender norms and consumption prompted the researcher to explore this relationship and bring more light into this area of knowledge.

Yet, it had not been anticipated that the pressure to perform leisure practices in a specific way would come from two different social sources. After immersion in the world of male spa consumers' experiences through semi-structured interviews, it became apparent that sociocultural norms, specific to the region of the North East, are not the only body of social influence adjusting the behaviour of male spa customers. The research participants revealed that the media plays an equally significant part in influencing body aestheticization and wellbeing. However, its impact appeared working in the opposite direction to the prevailing sociocultural norms in this part of the country.

As the evidence gathered suggests, the media has been encouraging males to embrace body beautification practices as an appropriate way of constructing masculine identities. Similarly, the chronological overview of various conceptualisations of masculinity provided in Chapter 2 suggests that innovative ways of creating a masculine image for men started to be conveyed through various media sources as early as the 1980s and particularly at the turn of the new century. Body aestheticization is now considered to be one of the legitimate ways of achieving a physically attractive image of the male, next to being involved in sports and other physical activities, which boost health, wellbeing and better physical looks in men. Yet, this new way of looking after the self is not overly adopted by men. This is due to the prevalent binary influence, affecting men's consumption practices nowadays. Men's motives for consuming spa services reveal that the pressure to look well and be physically attractive is important to men. However, they are equally concerned about being

obedient to local male gender norms in order to pre-empt negative consequences, which in this case mean social stigma.

Sociocultural norms and the media have been identified in this research as macro conditions having a direct influence on how spas are consumed today. These are the contextual conditions that create a specific environment, invoking adequate male consumer responses in the spa consumption context. By adopting the approach of Strauss and Corbin (1998), and by looking into interweaving events in the process and structure of spa consumption, this research was able to uncover a problem, or in other words a phenomenon, which has the power of making an impact on the buying decisions of male spa customers. This phenomenon is the social pressure “to which persons are responding through some form of action/interaction, with some sort of consequences” (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 132). These specific actions and interactions as well as the consequences, will be explained in the subsections that follow when presenting theoretical, methodological and practical contributions of this project.

## **7.3 Contributions**

So how does this study contribute to the consumer behaviour and gender fields and what practical implications can the developed theory of social pressure make to the spa business development? The contribution of this thesis is threefold.

### **7.3.1 Theoretical contributions**

#### **7.3.1.1 Contribution to exploring under researched context**

Firstly, as an exploration of male spa consumer motives and male spa consumption tendencies, socially constructed in and geographically specific to North East England, this study has no precedent. To date, as it has already been outlined in Chapter 1, a large gap exists in researching the spa industry. There has been a scarcity of studies examining the beauty and wellbeing market. In agreement with this, Erfurt-Cooper and Cooper (2009) noted a few years ago that the spa industry often receives attention from the coffee table type of writers, thus lacking a thorough and rigorous scholarly examination.

Secondly, the same situation persists in the field of consumer behaviour, which has overlooked the necessity to explore spa consumption trends. Some random studies

have been carried out, with the most recent being conducted by Chang and Beise-Zee (2013) and Medina-Muñoz and Medina-Muñoz (2013) investigating the conceptualisations of wellness from the tourism and marketing perspective in China and Spain respectively. In addition, Nilsen (2013) explored the link between the body ideals and spa experiences from the perspective of managers/therapists and consumers. Bearing in mind that today the global wellness tourism is evaluated as a \$438.6 billion market (Global Wellness Institute, 2013) and that a spa sector comprises a wide range of spas across the globe (i.e. hotel spas, day spas, resort spas, health spas, medical spas, destination spas, etc.) this type of industry cries out for attention from both marketing and tourism specialists.

The British spa business deeply and desperately requires the empirical investigation undertaken by scholars. To date, brief research about the British spa industry has been carried out only by Mintel (2007), which outlined the type of consumers and the size of the spa market (see Chapter 1). Other spa market investigations are limited to the views of consultants working in the fields of spas and tourism. For example, Cockerell and Trew (2003) monitored and compared the trends of the UK health and wellness tourism to other European and American markets. A year later, Harmsworth (2004) introduced the classifications of the spa, while Bowden (2009) gave a more thorough description of the general British spa consumption trends.

Scholarly investigations are even rarer. For example, Herbert (2009) and Glover (2011) analysed the British spa from a historical perspective by looking at what role spas played in the seventeenth and eighteenth century respectively. Finally, Little (2012) developed a paper on the spa where she introduced it as a therapeutic landscape for women's escape and relaxation. This overview of the British studies suggests that wellness tourism or, in other words, the British spa industry as the market of wellbeing and beauty desperately requires both qualitative and quantitative examination. In this respect, this study contributes to the field of consumer behaviour by providing the theory of motives and consumption tendencies among the male spa visitors in the North East of England. Furthermore, it contributes within the chosen consumption context about which very little is known.

Finally, it is also important to mention that all the scholarly literature on the spa industry has been researched either in general terms (Chang and Beise-Zee, 2013; Koh, Yoo and Boger JR, 2010; Konu, 2010; Little, 2012; Medina-Muñoz and Medina-Muñoz, 2013; Nilsen, 2013) or from the perspective of its female clientele (Hanks and Mattila,

2010; Little, 2012). Thus, the contribution, which this doctoral study makes, is that for the first time the analysis of spa consumption is provided from the position of its male customers through the analysis of their multiple spa experiences. With the growing tendency to groom and pay more attention to one's health and wellbeing, the male market segment has the potential to become a new and lucrative target for health and beauty industries. Thus, knowing and understanding the motives and needs of the male consumer when choosing and consuming spa services should be of primary interest to consumer researchers, spa business owners and managers. In this way, empirical evidence about what motivates male customers to enter the so far predominantly feminine landscapes of consumption contributes to both theory and practice.

### **7.3.1.2 Contribution with theory exploring the structure and process of consumption**

The study into male visitors' motives for consuming spa services, in order to improve one's health and physical image, has led to the development of a theory, which explains the structure and the process of spa consumption. This is in line with the perspective of social constructionism that this research adopts. Social constructionists are interested in answering the "why" and "how" questions to unveil the structure and process of a social phenomenon (Lindgren and Packendorff, 2009). The structure is defined by the conditions, that create an environment in which a specific problem or phenomenon can arise. In this study, that phenomenon is identified as social pressure, which comes from two directions. Firstly, it derives from sociocultural norms, created by society in the North East of England. The analysis of the sociocultural environment brings to the fore the significance of male gender norms and expectations for contemporary men to comply with traditional male gender roles: by being the breadwinners, in addition to being physically strong, active and healthy.

The second source of social pressure comes from a more formal source, which is the media. It equally dictates its expectations on the contemporary constructions of masculinity. However, instead of focusing on male behaviour as sociocultural norms usually do, the media concentrates on the male body image. By emphasising physical attractiveness, it conveys a general perspective of what a modern man should look like today. The media influence in the proposed theory of social pressure appears to be similar to the influence described in the extant body of literature. The empirical evidence is in line with the existing notion within gender and consumer behaviour

studies that today men experience an increasing pressure to construct an ideal self through grooming practices.

As the review of available literature suggests, the evidence of both types of pressure (that is the sociocultural norms and the media) have been found in the scholarly domain, however, each of them has been examined separately. Up to now, there is no evidence in existing research to indicate an interaction or a clash between the two different conditions, impacting upon male consumption practices and male gender constructions. Hence, this is an original contribution to the knowledge of consumer and gender research. The next sections will provide an overview over the process of male spa consumption and the concepts proposed.

### **7.3.1.3 New conceptualisations of consumption**

In this study, it is seen that sociocultural norms and the media pressurise men to behave in a different way, and this duality of expectations creates dissonance in male identities. This inner turmoil is reflected in men's chosen way of consuming spas. In the majority of cases described, spas for men are seen, and consumed, as by-products of other businesses such as a hotel and a gym. In this respect, there is a tendency among male customers in the North East, first of all, to be interested in the primary product, for instance a stay at a hotel or the use of the gym, and then being motivated to consume spas as a supplement to that previous purchase. The term "by-product" that this study suggests should be incorporated into marketing and consumer research when analysing consumption patterns. Previous studies have used other terminology to define the product or service that is bought as an addition to the main product (for example, they have been named as complementary products, value-added products or augments) (Bhaskaran and Gilbert, 2005; Kim, Huh and Knutson, 2010; Mai, Yang and Chen, 2011; Mukhopadhyay, Yue, Zhu, 2011; Yan and Bandyopadhyay, 2011).

This study contributes to marketing and consumer research studies by also proposing a new terminology of consumption. The theory of social pressure suggests that consumption can be not only hedonic and utilitarian (Bardhi and Arnould, 2005; Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982; Jantzen *et al.* 2012), but also determined by social factors, hence social. Although previous research acknowledged consumption as a social activity (Luo, 2005; Yim *et al.* 2013), it only focused on the link between the social status of the co-shopper towards the primary shopper and impulsive buying. For instance, Luo (2005), by drawing upon the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein and



Ajzen, 1975), suggested that friends induce purchasing, while shopping with family members results in decreased purchasing. In addition, it was found that the number of purchases increases when shopping with others, and decreases when shopping alone (Yim *et al.* 2013). This study, however, suggests that sexual orientation can also impact upon social consumption practices. These can be sub-categorised into heterosocial and homosocial consumption types, determined by what kind of companion spa services are being consumed with. On the other hand, consumption has been identified as monosocial, if consumed alone. By offering new concepts of sociability in consumption, this study contributes to reconsidering the historical perception of the spa. For example, in the eighteenth century, spa resorts served not only to meet the health needs of its customers but were also used as places for polite social interactions (Glover, 2011).

Indeed, notwithstanding the social model chosen by the spa customer, today a spa is more than a sanctuary where you can regain tranquillity and reconnect mind, body and soul. This type of business also provides an opportunity for its customers to socialise. In contemporary spas, men can improve their personal relationships by spending a relaxing and romantic time with their partners. Thus, the new concept of “romantic heterosocial consumption” was identified. At the same time, they can improve their social skills by learning to be polite conversationalists with strangers. This particularly concerns the monosocial type of consumers as they more than others are inclined to do that because they arrive at a spa unaccompanied. Finally, the homosocial type of consumption although reluctantly is being practiced by men in the British spas and could be propagated further through different marketing strategies as a legitimate way of male socialisation. The terms proposed by this study can enrich the discipline of marketing and open up a new area of analysis and debates. By paying more attention not only to what and why consumers consume, but also how they consume, this and other consumer studies can research consumption as the landscapes of social interaction.

Another contribution to the field of consumer research is the proposal to supplement the theory of consumption direction with two new terms derived from the theory of social pressure. Prior research suggested that consumption can be directed by approach and avoidance factors (Arnold and Reynolds, 2012; Elliot and Covington, 2001). However, men's narratives about their spa experiences revealed that consumption can be undertaken for social purposes, thus is socially-centred. In this respect, spa services are consumed together with other people or for the purposes of

pleasing partners and making them happy and special. In addition, consumption can be called self-centred if it is aimed and directed towards the self, by treating oneself as the love object and pampering oneself by purchasing luxurious and relaxing spa sessions. The terms “socially-centred” and “self-centred” consumption, have, to the best of researcher’s knowledge, not been used in consumer research to date. This study could potentially be the starting point to identifying consumer motives through consumption orientation. This means that self-centred consumers would most likely embark on consumption for relaxation and reinvigoration, while socially-centred clients would be more interested in collectable experiences (Keinan and Kivetz, 2011).

#### **7.3.1.4 New conceptualisation of masculinity**

Furthermore, by unveiling the male customers’ motives for purchasing spa services and by revealing men’s spa consumption experiences, this study contributes to both knowledge and practice with the new conceptualisation of masculinity. If perceptions of masculinity are changing due to various social, cultural and historical changes (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Nelson and Vilela, 2012; Tuncay 2006) and men’s interest in preserving or enhancing their physical attractiveness is growing on a global level (Market Research, 2014; McNeil and Douglas, 2011; Ricciardelli, Clow and White, 2010, etc.), it becomes more important than ever to turn the attention of scholars to this research area. By providing men’s perspectives on the current male gender norms in the North East, this study can advance gender research with the latest version of the concept of masculinity, socially constructed in, and specific, to the region of the North East. The latest concept of masculinity can be welcomed by marketing and gender specialists as well as practitioners. Gender and marketing scholars can incorporate the new concept of masculinity when exploring social behaviour, while the developers and directors of the spa business can create services matching latest perceptions of masculinity.

A new conceptualisation of masculinity, proposed in the theory of social pressure, is “*conflicted masculinities*”. This concept plays the role of the consequences in the aforementioned theory. The data gathered revealed that male spa users in the North East are in inner conflict. This term was derived from the analysis of the data gathered about the consumption styles of male spa visitors. Men use various strategies to avoid being socially stigmatised as feminine or gay. For example, they consume spa services mainly as by-products; they prefer heterosocial consumption to homosocial consumption in spas and talk about their spa visits only with those whom they trust.

The techniques employed suggest that men experience dissonance when contemplating spending or while spending their leisure time in spas. The actions they take to avoid possible negative circumstances force them to construct conflicted masculinities as the consequence of the aforementioned factors combined together, such as the conditions and the actions/ interactions employed before, during and after the consumption of spa services.

The findings from the theory of social pressure echoes the view recently expressed by Ostberg (2012). According to him, contemporary men are not only under pressure to juggle the roles of breadwinner and rebel. Currently, the pressure is also increasing on men to comply with traditional masculine roles that are based on rationality and with the recently emerged feminine consumer roles, closely related to physical appearance (Ostberg, 2012). According to Ostberg (2012), younger consumers are more obliged to negotiate contradictory roles in their lives in order to construct successful masculine identities. Similarly, the male respondents in this project unanimously spoke about younger men being preoccupied with a desire to look attractive to others.

This is a “danger zone” since exaggerated self-attention as well as self-neglect can be equally socially undesirable (Ostberg, 2012). In accordance with all consumer research, Ostberg (2012) concludes that “caring too much about one’s appearance or merely trying to dress to look beautiful seems to be constructed as something potentially dangerous for one’s masculinity”, because it is perceived feminine (p. 278). This is exactly what the interviewed men outlined in all 14 semi-structured interviews of this study. They construct conflicted identities before, during and after the process of spa consumption because of the constant fear for being perceived as non-heteronormative since they transcend the boundaries of gendered consumption.

By proposing a concept of conflicted masculinities, this consumer research contributes to both consumer behaviour and gender literature. It fits with what Brownlie (2010) recently expressed in his theoretical study of critical marketing, namely that social relations are very much predetermined by culture and history. His view is in accord with the very foundation of the concept of masculinity, shaped by sociocultural conditionings. Knowing the historical and cultural roots of the North East region, which until recently has been renowned as a mining and industrial landscape, consumption here still remains inseparable from gender stereotypes. This explains why spas are consumed as by-products and why body aestheticization is being resisted by men due to incompatibility with heteronormative norms. Therefore, the term “conflicted

masculinities” is embedded in the specific geographical location that defines and reflects men’s consumption practices in this part of the country.

The concept “conflicted masculinities” contributes to the existing theories of masculinities and gender drawn upon. First of all, it extends the theory of gender role conflict (Levant and Pollack, 1995; O’Neil, 1981; Pleck, 1995). Opposite to what the predecessor argued, conflict emerges due to two opposing influences (the regional sociocultural norms and the media) that make men construct their masculinities as conflicted. In the past, only strict and rigid male gender roles were seen as accountable for the conflict in men. Refusing to act upon the expected gender roles was often followed by devaluation and other negative consequences. Yet, the conflict that is experienced nowadays is more complicated as it pulls men into two different sides.

Secondly, the theory of conflicted masculinities extends the theory of hegemonic masculinity developed by Connell (1995, 2000). Connell (1995) depicted male social relations and their position within the social hierarchy, with the hegemonic form of masculinity taking the highest position and other masculinities, identified as marginalised and subaltern, taking the lower ranking due to their race, class or sexual orientation. The latter masculinities strive to improve their social status within the male hierarchy by adapting their actions to the heteronormative behaviour scripts. Connell (1995, 2000) described masculinities as being in tension rather in conflict. However, through this empirical work it became apparent that feelings of exclusion and marginalisation that men experience due to their otherness reflect the conflictual male gender dynamics.

The proposed theory of conflicted masculinities addresses this gap by identifying a conflict in the construction process of masculinities as well as male social relations. In the spa consumption context the conflict that masculinities undergo is reflected in their spa consumption patterns. Due to the prevalence of homophobia and devaluation of otherness, the male spa users select the safest ways of consuming spa services in the North East of England. The men interviewed admitted choosing spas as by-products to avoid being identified as feminine or homosexual. Therefore, masculinities constructed in spas are best to be defined as conflicted rather than subordinated.

Given the tendency to collate masculinity to sexuality (McCormack, 2012), the male spa users select their companions on the basis of their sexual background. The heterosexual men employ heterosexual or monosocial consumption, whilst

homosexual males prefer to enjoy spa services in the company of men of the same sexual orientation to escape direct marginalisation. Although homosociality is practiced in the North Eastern English spas not only by the homosexual spa consumers but also by the heterosexual male spa clients, it is not as popular as in the work context. This research contributes to the homosociality theory (Lipman-Blumen, 1976) by explaining it as context specific. A different level of preference for homosociality depends on the possible benefits that await men. If in the work environment, as organisation scholarship acknowledges, male social bonding leads to higher career perspectives and to maintaining male power within organisations (Broadbridge and Hearn, 2008; Holgersson, 2013; Mavin and Williams, 2013; Mavin *et al.* 2013), in spa spaces bonding with other men can be interpreted as non-heteronormative and homosexual. It is negative experiences rather than benefits which await men if they practice homosociality in spas.

Thirdly, this research extends Mavin and Grandy's (2012, 2013) theory of doing gender well and differently. Despite the negative consequences, attending spas can be rewarding. Those men, who consume spas as by-products after gym sessions, have an opportunity to construct a balanced-self. The theory of balanced-self can be explained by drawing upon Mavin and Grandy's (2012, 2013) theory of doing gender well and differently. In the spa consumption context, men do their gender well (in a masculine way) by attending a gym and do their gender differently (in a feminine way) by relaxing in a spa afterwards. By embracing both actions heterosexual men maintain their masculinities and enhance their femininities, whilst homosexual male spa users enhance their masculinities and maintain their femininities. The theory of doing gender well and differently suggests that performing gender according to one's sex category and against it occurs simultaneously, however, in the spa consumption context this happens at different times due to the specifications of spa spaces. Therefore, this thesis extends Mavin and Grandy's (2012, 2013) theory by arguing that doing gender well and differently in spas is not constructed simultaneously but at different times, and this gender performance results in the balanced-self. At the same time, the concept of balanced-self in the proposed theory of social pressure marks the multiplicity of masculinities so as the multiple realities of consumption.

Finally, the concept "conflicted masculinities" contributes to consumer research with the view that consumption is gendered, and that consumption places are social spaces of gender relations. This view derives from the empirical evidence strengthened with the Lefebvre's theory of spaces as social constructions (Van Inge, 2003). In that sense,

spas are the perceived, conceived and lived localities of masculinity and femininity constructions that shape each other and develop in relation to each other. Spa spaces serve as mediums for defining men's position within the male social hierarchy. Perceived and conceived as feminine localities, spas become spaces where masculinities are constructed and reconstructed to the desirable models of male behaviour through the selected social types of spa consumption. The latter strategies serve to reduce the conflict men face when attending feminised health, beauty and wellbeing spaces.

### **7.3.2 Methodological contributions**

This study employed a rarely-used methodology for data collection and analysis. The grounded theory approach is a non-traditional type of data gathering in research into consumption motives. Until now, the majority of consumer researchers used quantitative studies to explain consumer behaviour. This also applies to the research into gendered consumption (Dholakia, 1999; Souiden and Diagne, 2009; Stockurger-Sauer and Teichmann, 2013). Even those who believed in the suitability of qualitative research used phenomenology (Ourahmoune, 2012; Woodruffe-Burton, 1998), a discovery-orientated research approach (Tuncay and Otnes, 2008), comprehensive interviews approach (Kimmel and Tissier-Desbordes, 2000) or discourse analysis (Ostberg, 2012).

Goulding (1999a, b) was the first to set an example in exploring consumption trends via the principles of grounded theory. For example, she used this approach in exploring the "grey" consumer segment and its interest in heritage tourism. A decade later, Goulding and Saren (2010) suggested grounded theory as one of the most suitable methodologies for gaining insight into consumer experiences, particularly when researching creative industries or aesthetic consumption. This methodology helped the above-mentioned scholars unveil the subculture of Goths and their experiences when participating at the Goth festival in Whitby. Two years later, using this method, Harrison, Gentry and Commuri (2012) created a theory of transition to involved parenting when researching the consumption of household production by single fathers.

However, to date grounded theory remains underutilised for researching consumption. This study suggests that consumer research, which, intentionally or unintentionally, excludes grounded theory as a robust and systematic way of collecting and analysing

data, is missing the opportunity to unveil the hidden features of consumer behaviour that cannot be accessed via quantitative investigations. Furthermore, even other qualitative methods cannot guarantee that the same results will be achieved, given that the theoretical framework through which consumer behaviour is explored is predetermined in advance. This is not the case in grounded theory studies, since this type of research allows data to emerge naturally and follows the path directed by the research itself. It means that the study might explore areas that were not considered prior to beginning the research process, but which are nevertheless, significant in that specific research context. By allowing the participants to take the lead and share their multiple experiences, the researcher had an opportunity to discover things, which otherwise would have been left unrecognised as being relevant or not been recognised at all.

The study set as an objective the development of a theory about male spa consumption trends and selected a grounded theory approach to achieve a more precise picture of male spa consumer multiple experiences. This study into male spa visitors' purchases is the first study, however, which developed a theory of social pressure by following the Strauss and Corbin's (1998) grounded theory tenets. This has been accomplished by uncovering the process and structure of spa consumption that social constructionist studies aim to achieve. It means that through a grounded theory approach this research discovered what conditions influence the specific purchasing actions of male spa customers and what consequences follow this often complicated process. This information can be of benefit to the business world. Furthermore, this study developed a substantive theory that is specific to the context researched.

### **7.3.3. Practical contributions**

#### **7.3.3.1 Substantive theory to spa and beauty industries**

Through rigorous data collection and analysis, this study generated a substantive theory applicable to the spa industry. Although the results derived from the empirical investigation in the spa consumption context, and are thus primarily and directly related to the spa industry, they can also be equally applied to other businesses of a similar kind. For example, the beauty and cosmetics market is similar to the spa market, given that spa services are designed not only for health-orientated customers but also for those who search for hedonism and are seen as being indifferent to their physical appearances, thus, purchasing services for body beautification purposes. Similarly, the

cosmetics industry focuses on the beauty aspect, thus designing its products for the same reason – to help its consumers enhance their physical looks.

At the same time, cosmetics and spa industries are both closely associated with the female consumption market. Empirical and theoretical knowledge provides ample evidence to support this notion. For centuries, beautification was the prerogative of women, thus, not surprisingly female consumers were regarded as the clientele of many businesses producing products and services for body aestheticization. For this and the aforementioned reasons, the theory of social pressure proposed in this PhD study can be suitable not only to the spa industry but also can benefit beauty and cosmetics companies by helping them select appropriate strategies to attract the growing male grooming market. By knowing the current male consumer preferences and attitude to beauty practices, the relevant industries can offer services and products matching the needs of its male customers. Through theoretical knowledge, based on the empirical evidence gathered in this project, practitioners can create services suitable for prospective clientele and its niche.

Considering that the male market segment is becoming more interested in wellbeing and body aestheticization services, it is promising for the spa and other beauty industries. However, marketing specialists and spa business developers need to prepare specific and well-developed strategies to counteract the issues of social stigma currently still dominating in the North East. As empirical evidence suggests, men who step outside the boundaries of gendered consumption by being interested in body beautification practices, can possibly be perceived as feminine, thus, non-heteronormative. Therefore, a marketing input here could serve its purpose. By de-gendering the image of a spa and presenting it as the landscape of relaxation for both female and male consumers, this industry could diminish its prevalent associations with women.

### **7.3.3.2 Possible strategies**

Bearing in mind that the spa industry is closely associated with, and promoted to, its female clientele, spa owners and managers need to find a resolution to how social stigma could be tackled in this part of the country, where marginalisation issues affect men. This study recommends spa businesses to offer spa packages attractive to the hegemonic type of men, in order to promote spa consumption as suitable for both genders. This would contribute to making gender norms in this part of the country more



malleable, and ensuring gender equality not only in an organisational context but also in consumption where men could feel free to consume spa services without fear of being marginalised and stigmatised.

One of the suggestions that could potentially break the binary consumption as explicitly applicable for men or women is to create spa adverts where male consumers would feature. This would potentially help to attract a larger number of men into spas. Currently, spas are predominantly advertised as feminine spaces for pampering and relaxation, and this type of media message obstructs men from entering spa places without fear and hesitation. By featuring men in adverts as consumers of spa services, men and society in the North East generally would have a different perception of and attitude towards spas. This would potentially change the prevalent understanding that health, wellness and beauty premises are not limited to female clientele but are equally suitable and useable nowadays by male customers. And maybe the best option would be to start advertising contemporary spas for the male market segment as a homosocial type of activity for a group of men to enjoy after sporting events.

Although men consider their health to be an asset in constructing successful masculinity, thus, predominantly exercising in wellness clubs and consuming water-based spa facilities afterwards, the results of this study show that men also purchase beauty spa services to increase their self-esteem by constructing/reconstructing themselves as confident and attractive masculine identities. This is in line with the empirical results found by Hume and Mills (2013) who outline that women's involvement in purchasing undergarments is closely related to creating a self-image and self-esteem. Thus, advertisers and spa management, when promoting spas for the growing male market segment, need to take into consideration that men are not only interested in health and wellbeing but also in being physically attractive for socially-centred and self-centred reasons. Therefore, spas could be advertised as places for men to construct their masculinities, not only by building an attractive and desirable physique but also an attractive self-image through aesthetical body practices.

#### **7.3.3.3 Potential male market segments**

There are a few types of male consumers who could be targeted. Firstly, spas could be advertised to those male customers who seek hedonic consumption as a symbolic meaning of class, distinction and prestige (Husic and Cicic, 2009). They could be attractive to those men who want to display their wealth through a lifestyle of luxury. A

spa can place itself among the other signs of abundance next to automobiles, fashionable clothes and a senior position at work. Thus, it should be promoted to business customers or elite consumers as they seek exclusivity and quality (Li, Robson and Coates, 2013) and are ready to pay premium level prices (Li, Li and Kambele, 2012). As Li, Robson and Coates (2013) point out, "it is important that brands remain effective in making their consumers "stand out" within their given social environment" (p. 502). The spa business has this potential to deliver symbolic values sought by exclusive market segments.

In addition, a metrosexual market segment would possibly be one of the potential spa customers, given that these men invest their time and financial resources in preserving youthful looks and creating an aesthetically attractive image of the self. Finally, a spa can be an attractive leisure source for men who are interested in maintaining their health and wellbeing. So this category would involve men who are similar to the respondents in this study. The research participants use gym and spa facilities for constructing healthy masculinities. To those who belong to a hegemonic type of masculinity, spas with a combination of gym facilities are the best option. Such spas that are part of a gym and hotel premises have to attract men by promoting health and wellbeing services.

To conclude, despite being heavily influenced by postmodernism and aestheticization, current society is not only interested in luxury, prestige and hedonism. Men equally value health and choose to lead a healthy lifestyle by being physically engaged either through sport or activities at the gym. If spa businesses started advertising their services as a means for preserving men's health and wellbeing, this could potentially develop into an attractive and socially acceptable leisure practice among hegemonic men.

#### **7.3.3.4 Luxury consumption**

The findings of this research suggest men's motives for spa services are multidimensional. This reflects the multiplicity of male spa consumers' realities gathered through the epistemological social constructionist lens. Men do not come to spas explicitly for a single reason. In the North East, male spa customers are equally interested in maintaining a desirable physique, in preserving their health and longevity and in achieving a balanced-self through physical exercises at the gym and consuming relaxing spa sessions afterwards. In this part of the country contemporary men are

treating their bodies as deserving of a treat. Men have reported seeking escape from stressful life situations; hence, spas become an oasis for men to restore their life-work balance by giving their bodies a well-deserved break, which can contribute towards forming happy and healthy masculinities.

Drawing on the view of Hagtvedt and Patrick (2009) that luxury brands through the promise of hedonic pleasure can achieve brand extendibility, this study recommends that spa organisations maintain their status of luxury business because this can be viewed as an asset in the competitive market. Hedonism and luxury provide a competitive advantage, thus companies that focus on providing pleasurable experiences can excel against businesses offering only functional and practical services.

Considering that today luxury products and services are in high demand with consumers willing to offer considerable large sums of money (Husic and Cicic, 2009), it is a promising prospect for the spa industry to develop and expand its market. "The promise of pleasure is indeed powerful, and evokes in us the motivation to re-experience pleasurable feelings again and again" (Hagtvedt and Patrick, 2009, p. 608). This is what the female clientele have been doing for a long time; however, spa managers face a serious task in making spa services attractive to male customers. It can be argued that once this market segment is fully aware of what spas are, and that they are not a realm of consumption designed exclusively for women, male customers would come to experience and re-experience pleasure and hedonism as a means of creating healthy and happy masculinities.

This is an essential strategy as society is exposed to constant stress today. According to VisitEngland (2013), health tourism is predicted to be appreciated not only by older health conscious consumers but also by those who need to restore the work-leisure equilibrium. By being an oasis for restoring self-balance and serving as an escape from the hectic social environment, a spa has a potential to expand its business scope beyond the boundaries of female gender. As recent studies suggest, consumers are constantly interested and looking for more luxurious and hedonic experiences (Hagtvedt and Patrick, 2009; Husic and Cicic, 2009; Kapferer and Bastien, 2009). This does not apply exclusively to women but engages male customers at an increasing rate. Deluxe spas in the North East may be able to look forward to a positive future because luxury guarantees prestige (Husic and Cicic, 2009) and it could provide its male customers with a venue for constructing successful masculinities through the use

of beauty, health and wellbeing services. However, they have to prepare effective strategies for counteracting social stigma that can still be attached to those men who might potentially invest in their health and physical appearance.

## **7.4 Study limitations**

Whilst every single study makes its contribution to theory and practice, at the same time it is important to acknowledge that none of them are without limitations. This applies to this study as well. Although every effort was made to avoid this, there are a few areas that need to be discussed in order to guide future researchers undertaking interdisciplinary research, using the grounded theory methodology.

First of all, this study aimed to explore the gender impact on male consumer behaviour in the spa consumption context. Thus, the literature review aimed to identify the theoretical underpinnings from the scholarly fields of gender and consumer behaviour. More specifically, the study had to provide an overview of studies that have been contributing theoretically and empirically to the conceptualisations of masculinity. This was required to build a foundational understanding into the aforementioned area, before empirically exploring the male spa consumer motives for services that enhance one's wellbeing and physical appearance.

Exploring the literature of gender and consumer behaviour, which belong to the disciplines of sociology and marketing respectively, involved a great deal of attention, precision and time spent in meeting these objectives. Although the researcher reviewed theories related to masculinity, it cannot be concluded that the entire literature related to the aforementioned concept was exhausted here. Nevertheless, the researcher made every attempt to discuss relevant developments in the conceptualisations of masculinity. Likewise, the researcher is confident that she has introduced the contributions of key authors from the subject areas of consumer and gender research.

It is a limitation of this study that only a total 14 interviews were conducted in this research. This is due to the limited access the researcher had. Although many spa organisations were contacted via email and in person, only one spa business agreed to grant access to its premises for data collection. This limited the number and variety of male interviewees, since four participants interviewed on the spa premises were the gym users at a specific hotel. Nevertheless, the author of this study approached a

further eight research participants via snowball sampling and this reduced the impact of the aforementioned limitation, since these research participants had visited other types of spas, for example, day spas, Turkish baths or hall spas across the North East and beyond.

In the grounded theory research one is required to employ theoretical sampling, which means that the researcher would be interviewing the participants based on the data required. With limited access to male spa participants, (not only because of the struggle to acquire more organisational consents, but also because of the limited number of male spa users in general), the researcher interviewed the participants on the basis of agreement given rather than their known suitability for this research. Despite this restriction, the study achieved the requirements of the grounded theory given that the participants needed were found anyway, and that the suitability of any interviewee only really emerges in the interview itself.

It has already been stated earlier that due to the exploratory nature of this study and the interpretive approach adapted for carrying out research into male spa consumer behaviour, the results of this PhD work are not statistically generalizable. The theory of social pressure generated aimed to meet the researcher's epistemological position of social constructionism and reflect multiple realities of spa consumption. Social constructionists are interested in uncovering the social nature of experiences that are constructed in social spaces and therefore do not aim to generalise the results. Although this study did make generalisations, this was only in an analytical and symbolic sense. Research that aims to build theory is more concerned with generating a theory, which could explain the events under investigation in the specific social setting rather than reaching generalizable conclusions about them.

In addition, data interpretation can be viewed as a challenge when seeking a truthful and credible theory. This is due to the nature of qualitative and interpretive research, given that data interpretations can be unlimited. This process depends on the knowledge of the context researched and the experience and personality of the researcher. Yet, grounded theory studies are suitable exactly for these contexts, which are classed as underexplored or not explored at all. Even more, in these types of studies it is advisable to start collecting data at a very early stage to avoid any preconceptions, arising from the literature review.

Since it was the first study where the researcher developed a theory grounded in the answers of its respondents, it can be viewed as a learning experience in undertaking grounded research. However, in this study data was collected and analysed by following the descriptions given by Strauss and Corbin (1998) in order to reduce any concerns about bias. Furthermore, the credibility of the theory developed was verified by approaching the interviewed and new research participants before presenting its final version.

## **7.5 Future research**

This study focused on the motives of male spa consumers for purchasing wellbeing and beauty practices in spas in the North East of England. It set to analyse the spa consumption trends among the male consumers using interpretivism as a general theoretical underpinning and social constructionism as the research epistemology. Future research, however, could advance consumer behaviour studies about men's motives for purchasing wellbeing and beautifying spa services by conducting quantitative research. This would verify the results of the study in a quantitative way allowing statistical generalisation.

Although research participants provided a prevalent perspective on male gender norms in this part of the country based on their observation of other men's behaviour within their social groups, this cannot be classed as a robust way to conclude that in general men in the North East do not consume spas for their leisure because of potential marginalisation for being perceived as feminine, and thus, non-heteronormative. At the same time, we can only make an assumption that male spa consumers prefer heterosocial consumption over the other available forms of social consumption because of the possible stigmatisation of being perceived as homosexual. Nevertheless, men's narratives give ground to contemplate that this type of behaviour might be applicable to the majority of men in the North East, since male consumer behaviour in the South (i.e. London) according to a few participants is different. Yet, in order to prove this statement statistically a quantitative study would contribute significantly.

This interpretive and social constructionist research has contributed to existing knowledge by developing a substantive theory of social pressure. Consumer research would benefit from a formal theory of social pressure, which could be used in many social contexts. For this to happen, a comparative analysis of many substantive areas

would be required (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). This is a suggestion for further direction of this or likeminded researchers to explore other contexts of gendered consumption and extend the applicability of the social theory proposed.

A future research could also concentrate on the behaviour of male spa consumers within geographical regions. The collection of male spa experiences in the South of England or specifically in London would lead into a comparative study of the consumption of spa services between the North East of England and the South of England. In addition, a cross-cultural study could follow to provide more contribution to knowledge and practice.

Finally, gathering the views of spa business owners or managers in the North East region would extend the discussion about the challenges this industry face. The management perspectives gathered could suggest what would be required further from marketing theorists to make a spa industry less gendered and more appealing to its male clients.

## **7.6 Chapter summary**

The final chapter provided an overview of the entire study to remind the reader of all the steps undertaken in producing this work. This involved the aim of the study, the areas of the literature consulted and the methodology employed for the purpose of developing a theory about the male spa consumer segment in the North East of England and its motives for consuming spa services known as enhancing one's health, wellbeing and physical appearance. It then summarised the key findings of this research and progressed to introducing its theoretical, methodological and practical contributions.

In summary, the original theoretical contribution of this work was achieved by:

- Addressing the gap in consumer research literature as requiring attention for more studies exploring the impact of male gender on male consumption practices;
- Investigating the spa consumption context about which scholarly knowledge was limited;

- Exploring the motives of male spa consumers' experiences never previously researched in the context of spa consumption;
- Providing new conceptualisations of consumption (by-product), social types of consumption (heterosocial, homosocial and monosocial consumption) and the direction of consumption (socially-centred and self-centred consumption) to enrich the theories of consumer behaviour and consumer research in general;
- Providing a new conceptualisation of masculinity (conflicted masculinities) to advance consumer and gender research;
- Conducting the first study in the consumer behaviour field, which employed the Strauss and Corbin's (1998) approach to exploring male consumer behavior;
- Proposing a theory of social pressure to explain male spa consumption through its structure and process.

Finally, the chapter acknowledged the limitations of this study, concluded with the suggested options for future research and revisited the research question and objectives in order to show how the latter have been met.



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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Example of semi-structured interview and coding

#### Interview No. 3 with codes

Interview text	Codes/concepts
<p><i>OK, so maybe we can start?</i></p> <p>OK.</p> <p><i>Could you tell me, could you share with me your spa experiences?</i></p> <p>It's really from maybe the age of twenty, twenty one – just to relax really, a good and better standard of life, health – that's why I started going. I started off with friends, three four friends when we were quite younger [we] used to go to a gym, have a sauna, have a swim and then just gradually keep going from there, on and off.</p> <p>OK.</p>	<p>Men's behaviour. Past. Homosocial consumption. Acceptable behaviour. Spa activities. Balanced-self. Balance between activity/passivity. Spa activities.</p>

<p>So it's roughly it.</p> <p><i>So are these friends male friends?</i></p> <p>Yes.</p> <p><i>Right. So is it – how often you were doing that?</i></p> <p>...maybe two, two three times a week, early on and obviously as you grow up some don't bother go in, some ... tend not to be bothered, be lazy or other things: work commitments, whatever, family... But I just technically keep going over the years.</p> <p><i>OK. So what was the reason for going to spas? How did you decide?</i></p> <p>...Probably in the earlier days for a better body, to be honest, to be able to be more attractive to the opposite sex. So that's probably why. That's why you initially first start doing that.</p> <p><i>So is it your view that if you go to a spa, you look better and feel better or is it the society's view?</i></p> <p>... For me personally, it's my view, my opinion... I mean if you – once you've been, you do a bit</p>	<p>Balance between activity/passivity. Self-neglect. Escapism from physical stagnation. Balanced-self.</p> <p>Reasons. Enhance physical appearance. Attract opposite sex. Direction. Socially-centred consumption</p> <p>Attitude. Acceptable behaviour. Spa</p>
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<p>exercise, you have a sauna or a swim, I personally feel a lot better for it as opposed to sitting in a house ... watching telly before work. I'd rather do something a bit productive and feel a bit better for it.</p> <p><i>OK. Can you tell me more what kind of activities you do in a spa?</i></p> <p>It's mainly gym, to be honest: weights, I do loose weights and a little bit of cardio after that and then just a light swim and a sauna, that's roughly it. Maybe about forty minutes in the gym, twenty minutes – I tend to break my day up: I get up, get something to eat, it depends on what shifts I'm working. If I am on a shift I like to come after the breakfast and do a little bit, go home, relax and go to work.</p> <p><i>So how long would you spend in a gym or generally in a spa?</i></p> <p>An hour and a half in a spa, gym – forty minutes on a weight section, maybe ten fifteen minutes cardio, half an hour in the pool area.</p> <p><i>So half an hour you would devote for spa activities, like sauna and Jacuzzi?</i></p> <p>Yeah, Jacuzzi, sauna and ten minutes swim something like that. Keep it ticking over.</p>	<p>activities. Gym. By-product. Escapism</p> <p>Acceptable behaviour. Spa activities. Gym. By-product. Reasons. Balanced-self. Balance between activity and passivity.</p> <p>Acceptable behaviour. Spa activities. Gym. By-product.</p> <p>Acceptable behaviour. Spa activities. By-product. Balanced-self. Balance</p>
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<p><i>What are your reasons for using Jacuzzi, sauna and ...</i></p> <p>Just to relax, basically, just to ... I play sports as well, like a football on a Saturday as well, sometimes my legs are off-tight, the muscles are stiff and a sauna and a Jacuzzi helps to relieve that and a light swim so that's the only reason. I don't do it for any other – I don't bother with any treatments or with massages or anything like that, just better gym work, better cardio, light swim, sauna, steam something like that.</p> <p><i>OK. Can you tell me why you don't use massages; you don't go for massages or other beauty treatments?</i></p> <p>...I think it's the time aspect of it, to be honest ... I think an hour and a half maybe three four times a week it's quite nor...– If I needed a massage I would have one, I haven't had a massage for years.</p> <p><i>But have you had in the past?</i></p> <p>Yes, in the past, I have, yes.</p> <p><i>Can you tell me more about your experiences when you had a massage?</i></p>	<p>between activity and passivity.</p> <p>Typical activities. Benefits.</p> <p>By-product. Relaxation. Balanced-self.</p> <p>Balance between activity and passivity</p> <p>Conditions. Time deficiency</p> <p>Time dimension</p>
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<p>To be honest, I haven't actually come to a specific spa for a massage, it was a friend of mine, she was qualified so I used to go round to see her, she used to do it for me. I wouldn't actually come to a spa – I haven't been but I would, I would like, I just haven't done it.</p> <p><i>OK, so what were your main motives why you went for a massage?</i></p> <p>At a time I was in a heavy job, a bit of back pain, a bit of unrest so that was the main motives. That's it. [smiles]</p> <p><i>That's it?</i></p> <p>That's it, yeah.</p> <p><i>No other reasons?</i></p> <p>No. No. Just cause she's just recently qualified. I thought she can help me out and I can help vice versa.</p> <p><i>And did it help?</i></p>	<p>Regular consumption. Location Friend's home.</p> <p>Reasons. Utilitarian. Health reasons Benefits.</p> <p>Reasons.</p>
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<p>Oh, yeah, yeah.</p> <p>Yes?</p> <p>Yeah. Definitely. I mean, I think depending on what type of work you are in, you should have them quite regularly – I know I should really have them a lot more because obviously I've got a build-up of knots and so on and so forth</p> <p><i>Mhh</i></p> <p>but ... maybe in the future I'll have more.</p> <p><i>OK. So it's mainly for health reasons?</i></p> <p>For health reasons, yes.</p> <p><i>So you were doing in the past for health reasons and you would do the same – Would you do in the future for the same reasons?</i></p> <p>Yes. Yes.</p>	<p>Benefits</p> <p>Pain relief</p> <p>Time</p> <p>Reasons. Health reasons</p> <p>Future</p>
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<p><i>Or would be other reasons?</i></p> <p>... mainly for health, not just for relaxation or anything like that. Health issues, reasons.</p> <p><i>OK. So do you think spas – how do you evaluate spas in gender terms?</i></p> <p>... I think they are fine but I think in this society, in this culture that we are in, especially in a working town like Newcastle, it's predominantly more looked as a female thing, maybe I sound a bit sexist but ... they go away on weekends, away to spa days, packages and so on and so forth. My mother does it, my sister all the time. The men tend to – they just do it a bit more.</p> <p><i>So your mum and sister do these activities?</i></p> <p>Yeah, yeah these activities.</p> <p><i>Have you ever considered joining them?</i></p> <p>No [Smiles].</p>	<p>Benefits. Reasons. Utilitarian. Health reasons</p> <p>Attitude. Regional sociocultural norms. Unacceptable behaviour. Feminine activity</p> <p>Unacceptable behaviour. Feminine activity</p> <p>Rejection</p>
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<p><i>No? Why?</i></p> <p>Cause it's seen as a bit of – in a bit ... it's not really a man, it's not seen as a manly thing to do to go and get a manicure or sit and have a massage or whatever. It's just my opinion, not for me.</p> <p><i>What about the society? Have you kind of gathered the society's view on these activities, if men engage in these activities?</i></p> <p>I mean as time evolves it's becoming a little bit, a bit ... not popular but ... its ... maybe when I was younger no men, not very men would do that, not all of the men would do but there is a few more go to chill out, that I know, not very many. There are changes evolved from maybe ten, fifteen years ago.</p> <p><i>OK, so you see yourself these changes?</i></p> <p>Yeah. I see the changes, yeah.</p> <p><i>OK.</i></p> <p>Yes. People are moving with the times, gradually but surely.</p>	<p>Masculinity. Unacceptable behaviour. Feminine activity. Condition – sociocultural norms</p> <p>Men's behaviour. Changes. Growing acceptance. Past.</p> <p>Changes</p>
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<p><i>So what is becoming more acceptable for a man to do in today's world, nowadays?</i></p> <p>I don't know. I just think a lot of years ago it was all industry work, old fashioned - a man goes to work ... it's just doesn't seem very or did not seem a very manly thing to do. That's about it.</p> <p><i>OK, so what were the qualities, which were really... what was classed kind of a manly thing to do in the past and what is classed now as a manly thing to do?</i></p> <p>In the past the men went to work, then they went into the pub after work. Now, obviously, people want to live longer, they want to look after themselves a bit better, they eat better, drink less or they try to, hence a lot of people now go to a gym, a few men probably go to spas as well.</p> <p><i>OK.</i></p> <p>It's just a longer and better standard of living, I think health reasons probably...</p> <p><i>So what are the current qualities of men, what a true man should be... supposed to be?</i></p> <p>I don't know that question, everybody, every man is different</p>	<p>Typical activities. Hard work. Past. Unacceptable behaviour. Unmasculine. Compliance with sociocultural norms.</p> <p>Past. Typical activities. Socialising. Drinking. Reasons. Longevity. General awareness</p> <p>Reasons. Health reasons</p> <p>Masculinity.</p>
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<p>Yes.</p> <p>It's just depends.</p> <p><i>What about your own view?</i></p> <p>...I like to get up, work hard, have a few drinks, but at the same time I like to live a healthy life as well: I try to eat right, go to a gym, have a swim, have a sauna. It's a balancing act, isn't it as opposed to what it was a long time ago – hardly any exercise, too much alcohol, too much pub, hard work... So for me ...that's – I like to keep myself fit, have a good social life, work hard. Simple as that.</p> <p><i>OK. Have you noticed whether gender norms have changed recently or not?</i></p> <p>The what sorry?</p> <p><i>Gender norms ... have they changed recently?</i></p> <p>I don't know what you mean?</p>	<p>Masculinity. Typical activities.</p> <p>Socialising. Drinking. Work. Spa activities. Self-neglect. Past. Reasons.</p> <p>Balance between activity and passivity.</p> <p>Escapism from physical stagnation.</p> <p>Past. Fitness</p>
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<p><i>What I mean is what is classed appropriate for a man and what is classed appropriate for a woman.</i></p> <p>Oh yes! Yeah, yeah.</p> <p>Yes?</p> <p>Of course.</p> <p><i>Could you speak about that a bit more, please?</i></p> <p>Well, it's just ... it's getting back ... our times have moved on ... ten, fifteen, twenty years ago the women's work was that sexist, it was seen as to go to the kitchen, a man went to work, and now everyone just intermingles. Women with sports now, there is a lot of women playing football, rugby ... it's just moved the times, things are changing. I think it's good like.</p> <p><i>Do you think the changing gender norms affecting your, as a consumer, [your] behaviour?</i></p> <p>Not me personally. No.</p>	<p>Changes. Changes in gender norms</p> <p>Changes</p> <p>Typical activities. Women's activities. Domestic. Freedom of behaviour. Gender convergence.</p> <p>Denial.</p>
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<p><i>What about others, have you noticed some changes in your friends' behaviour as customers?</i></p> <p>... I haven't, I don't notice it, to be honest. It's just, I think it's just a slow progression, over time things fit in, things changing, you take them for what they are. Hopefully the world is the better place for it, I think.</p> <p><i>OK. How do you look after yourself? Do men look after themselves?</i></p> <p>I think you have got to, to be honest, especially in my age. Once you get past a certain time, a certain age – I am not twenty one anymore; I am [age] year old. Got to keep yourself ticking over. Especially if you drink a lot on a weekend you can't do it as the young lads do it, got to keep yourself fit. Sports as well. Injuries take longer to heal so you try to prevent that as well by keeping yourself as fit as you can.</p> <p><i>OK. What are other ways to look after yourself? Do you look after yourself in other way?</i></p> <p>What do you mean?</p> <p><i>In terms of physical appearance? Are you concerned about the way you look?</i></p>	<p>Men's behaviour. Changes. Slow progression</p> <p>Men's behaviour. Reasons. Condition: age Typical activities. Drinking. Sports. Fitness. Masculinity.</p>
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<p>To a certain degree, yes. Especially at my age, I am single now, I have just been with the girl since I was twenty five, so we split up and now you become single, you want to make yourself look as good as possible.</p> <p>OK.</p> <p>As opposed to the opposite.</p> <p>OK. <i>So how would you enhance your physical appearance?</i></p> <p>Just need to feel good about yourself, mentally as well as well as physically. That's why you go to the gym, trying to get yourself a better body, to become a more appealing to the opposite sex.</p> <p>OK. <i>Would you do – would you use cosmetics to enhance your physical appearance?</i></p> <p>... no, not me personally.</p> <p>Why?</p> <p>At this stage, no I wouldn't ... It's just at this moment of time I wouldn't. In the future ... five ten</p>	<p>Age. Reasons. Attract the opposite sex</p> <p>Self-neglect.</p> <p>Self-like. Self-centred consumption. Acceptable behaviour. Typical activities. Gym. Reasons. Masculinity. Attract the opposite sex</p> <p>Rejection. Men's beauty practices.</p> <p>Rejection. Future practices. Reasons.</p>
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OK...	
That's it.	
Why?	
Why? Keep your skin looking younger.	Men's beauty practices. Preserving youthful looks
OK	
The older you get the younger you want to be.	Condition. Ageing. Desire for youthful looks
<i>Right. So it matters to you?</i>	
Yeah, yeah.	
Yes?	
Yeah. That side of it, yeah. No that's just all. I use a moisturising cream, a good moisturiser, that's	Men's beauty practices. Moisturising

<p>about it. Nothing more than that.</p> <p>OK.</p> <p>No fancy eye creams or anything like that... Gym now?</p> <p><i>Do you ...– have you noticed – what about your friends? Do they use cosmetics?</i></p> <p>You see, I have two lots of friends: I have friends I went to school with and I have other friends who I have met after school. One lot of friends I went to school with, what you call it an old school, old fashioned, more like manly men who went to a school, in a pub and are not too ... they are not as concerned as my other friends about their appearance or their big beer belies whereas my other friends they go to the gym, they have personal trainers and some of them, I suppose aren't, not bothered about getting cosmetic surgery probably. My one friend is talking about getting a bit of Botox now. That's a male friend. I've got, obviously, I've got a couple of female friends who get cosmetic surgery quite often.</p> <p><i>Yes, but what are the reasons of that man for getting a Botox done?</i></p> <p>Same again, probably just to look better. Simple as that.</p>	<p>Men's beauty practices. Rejection.</p> <p>Men's behaviour. Typical activities. Pub. Attitude.</p> <p>Indifference</p> <p>Unhealthy lifestyle. Self-neglect.</p> <p>Typical activities. Rejection. Social influence. Men's beauty practices. Botox injections</p> <p>Preserve youthful looks. Self-like. Self-</p>
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<p>OK.</p> <p>Look better and feel better.</p> <p><i>So how do your friends, yourself evaluate that? Are you accepting it as an appropriate activity for a man?</i></p> <p>Like I said earlier on ... as times go by, time goes on, it becomes more and more acceptable as opposed to ten, fifteen years ago. You hear about more often, you see more people getting it done. It's not as expensive as used to be one time, it's becoming more available. So my views have changed over the last few years.</p> <p><i>So what is the society's views on men who beautify themselves a lot. Have you noticed – What do you think yourself personally about these men and [what] the society [thinks]?</i></p> <p>It depends to what level, to what degree .... When I was first going out, looking at girls with my friends who are like twenty, twenty one – the difference then between now – so like about fifteen years – is immense. Now the young boys of twenty one are getting eyebrows tinted, covered in false tan ...it's a lot, it's changed dramatically since I was like twenty one.</p>	<p>centred consumption.</p> <p>Self-like. Self-centred consumption</p> <p>Attitude. Men's beauty practices. Growing acceptance Changes.</p> <p>Attitude. Men's beauty practices. Time. Younger men's behaviour. Enhancing physical appearance Changes.</p>
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<p>OK.</p> <p>So it's become more acceptable for them to do it. Fifteen years ago it was a bit frowned upon to go to that extreme: teeth whitening, eyebrows tinted, false tans, sunbeds wasn't too bad. A lot of them are getting sprayed tans, now you can spot a mile off with an orange glow, covered with – they've all got tattoos all over. So... it's changed, society has changed dramatically, I think, compared to fifteen years ago when it was more of a working town Newcastle, talking about Newcastle life. So things have changed, yeah.</p> <p>OK.</p> <p>Have seen a dramatic change.</p> <p><i>So how were these people treated by the society? Those who were doing some beauty treatments?</i></p> <p>When you look back, it did not go on. So but now it's the normal, people ... even the younger lads – fifteen, sixteen, seventeen – are gonna look at them and think "Ah, that's the fashion, that's the style" and it's just as drift feel effect. So now it's the norm, isn't it, the normal for the twenty to twenty five age people ...So. That's it.</p>	<p>Changes. Growing acceptance. Younger men's behaviour. Men's beauty practices. Reasons. Enhance physical appearance. Gender convergence. Consumption of cosmetics. Dramatic change</p> <p>Dramatic change.</p> <p>Unacceptable behaviour. Past. Younger men's behaviour. Acceptable behaviour. Changes. Attitude.</p>
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*OK. Would you like to add anything?*

No, that's fine. I really need to get in there and get some work done because I've got a car that needs to go in for an MOT as well.

*OK, thank you very much for your time.*

No problem.

*I really appreciate that.*

OK, thank you.

*And there is some water if you would like.*

I am fine thanks.

[End of interview]

## Appendix B: Themes of questions

Themes of questions
<p><b><i>Men's spa practices and motives</i></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Could you please share with me your spa experiences?</li> <li>2. How often do you go to spas?</li> <li>3. Do you come alone/ with other people? Why?</li> <li>4. How many people do you come with?</li> <li>5. Who are these people (friends, colleagues, family members)?</li> <li>6. Are they men/women?</li> <li>7. Could you compare your experiences when you come alone and with friends/ colleagues/family members? Are these experiences different and how?</li> <li>8. How long do you stay in a spa?</li> <li>9. Is going to spas a season activity?</li> <li>10. What are your reasons for going to spas?</li> <li>11. What does influence your decision to come to a spa?</li> <li>12. How does going to spas affect your self-perception?</li> <li>13. What is society's view about men who go to spas?</li> <li>14. How do your closest friends, family members evaluate your decision?</li> <li>15. Does it have an impact on your choice of activities while at a spa?</li> <li>16. What activities do you usually choose? Why?</li> <li>17. How important are they to you? Why?</li> <li>18. Would you describe yourself as a regular user of the mentioned services?</li> <li>19. Do you remember the first time you came to a spa? When was it?</li> <li>20. How did your choice for spa treatments differed from the current decisions? What activities did you select that time and why?</li> <li>21. How do you choose treatments? Do you choose them from the list of treatments for men/ women? Are you comfortable in choosing from the list of treatments for women? How does it make you feel about it?</li> <li>22. Have you tried treatments that are considered to be more applicable for women (for example, manicure with colour, facials)?</li> <li>23. Have you ever tried treatments for men? What do you think about them?</li> <li>24. How do you define spa treatments? Which gender do you attribute them to?</li> <li>25. How do you see spas in the future? Will it remain a gendered place?</li> </ol>



***Perception of masculinity***

1. Could you describe what it means to be a man nowadays?
2. What qualities a man should possess? Why? Could you give some examples, please?
3. What qualities for men are undesirable? Why? Could you give some examples, please?
4. Who is your role model? Could you explain why, please?
5. Could you tell me what your friends, relatives, work colleagues think what a real man should be?
6. Do these opinions match the overall view of society?
7. How this perception is influencing your own views?
8. How does the contemporary **perception** of masculinity differ from the one of your father's and grandfather's understanding? Why? Please, give some examples.

***Influence on consumption patterns***

1. How does the current **perception** of masculinity affect your consumption behaviour? What products (services) do you usually buy? Do you tend to buy certain products? Why?
2. Could you give examples when you had to buy something (for instance, cosmetics, lingerie) for your women/partner and how did you feel that time? Why did you feel like that?

***Gendered consumption practices***

1. Do you think activities are gendered? Do you think there are activities that are more appropriate for men or women? Could you give some examples, please?
2. How would you classify spa practices? Is it a gendered activity? Which gender would you attribute them to?

***Gender roles***

1. What are the gender roles in the current times? What is classed appropriate for a man and a woman? Could you give some examples, please?
2. Have you ever received a comment that what you did was not appropriate for a man? Could you give an example, please? How did you feel about it?
3. Has such comment stopped you from engaging in a particular activity? Why?

***Men's concern about their physical appearance***

1. Are men concerned about their physical appearance? Why?
2. What about yourself? How is it important or unimportant? Could you give some examples, please?

3. What are your opinion and the opinion of your male friends, work colleagues about men who engage in practices that can enhance one's physical appearance?
4. Is there pressure in terms of how men should look nowadays?
5. Do you feel that pressure? Could you give some examples, please?
6. How does the current **perception** of masculinity affect men's grooming practices? Have you noticed any changes in the way men groom themselves? Could you provide some examples, please?
7. How do British men groom themselves?
8. How do you groom yourself? Have these practices changed and how different are they in comparison to the past?

### ***Metrosexuality***

1. Are you familiar with the concept of metrosexuality or a metrosexual man?
2. How would you define it?
3. How would you describe a metrosexual man?
4. How can the metrosexual be recognised? What are his distinctive features?
5. How is the metrosexual different from the other types of men?
6. What practices do the metrosexuals tend to engage in?
7. How common is it for metrosexuals to go to spas?
8. Would you call yourself a metrosexual man?

## Appendix C: Interviewees' profiles

Participant	Nationality/ Location	Age group	Sexual orientation	Occupation	Length of Interview
John Interview No.1 Interview No. 11	British/ North East	60+	Heterosexual	Retired	1:04:31  0:33:58 (for theory validation)
Scott Interview No. 2	British/ London	22-25	Heterosexual	Actor/ Musician	0:18:03
Robert Interview No. 3	British/ North East	31-40	Heterosexual	Factory Worker	0:18:26
Andrea Interview No. 4	Italian  Living in the North East	31-40	Heterosexual	Lecturer	1:47:39
Michael Interview No. 5	British/ North East	41-50	Heterosexual	Managing Director	0:40:31
Steven Interview No. 6	British/ North East	41-50	Heterosexual	Civil Engineer	0:39:50
Thomas Interview No. 7	British/ North East  Currently living in London	26-30	Homosexual	Sales Manager	0:36:23

Brian Interview No. 8	British/ North West	51-60	Heterosexual	Managing Director	1:25:45
William Interview No. 9 Interview No. 14	British/ South  Living in the North East since the age 18	41-50	Homosexual	Social Worker	2:12:37  0:33:47 (for theory validation)
Samuel Interview No. 10	British/ North East	51-60	Heterosexual	Lecturer	1:44:41
Andrew Interview No. 12	British/ North East	22-25	Homosexual	Cabin Crew	0:51:42
Ben Interview No. 13	British/ North East	22-25	Heterosexual	Lecturer	0:59:43

## **Appendix D: Examples of memos**

### **Memo “Building concepts”**

Written: 13/04/2012

This started to happen during the analysis of the 4th interview. Before that it was more a descriptive analysis which is quite often common at the beginning of data analysis. Now I am starting to see concepts in the data, in the events rather than giving a very descriptive explanation of what is happening in the spas in the North East from the male participants' perspectives.

### **Memo “Rejection”**

Written: 06/05/2013

Among rejected activities the 5<sup>th</sup> participant mentioned not only grooming or preening but also sunbathing. This makes me again draw a conclusion that men do not like passiveness and choose activeness whether it is an active participation in sport and gym or whether activeness expressed in decision making process which is more a psychological characteristic.

Based on information gathered from the 6<sup>th</sup> participant beautification is rejected. What also is rejected is the youth preservation strategies such as Botox injections and surgical interventions including the previously mentioned make-up. The former ones are rejected because it does not seem to be a natural thing to do and it possibly goes against nature. Unhealthy has been identified as the second reason whereas low level of testing is the third reason for not using Botox injections.

### **Memo “Escapism”**

Written: 31/05/2013

Interview No. 9

The person confirmed that spas are used as places to escape from mundane reality. He confirmed that by saying, “It’s a special treat. Yeah ... definitely”. He used a word a treat. It means that these phrases can be connected to escapism from mundane reality. Mundane means something boring, something that happens on a day to day basis whereas a treat it is something that happens occasionally hence spas become places which offer something different that rarely happens at home or in everyday life.

It has been confirmed that couples be they homosexuals or heterosexuals see visits to spas as a form of escapism from mundane reality that helps them create a stronger bond between each other and hence brings more romanticism into the relationship.

### **Memo: Spa – by-product**

Written: 09/08/2013

By looking into more examples, it became clear that information needs to be added regarding the spa being a by-product because it is part of the hotel facilities. However this does not necessarily mean that spas will be used only by the hotel guests. There is a tendency to use spas which are based in hotels by the consumers who come there because they get a birthday gift (Part. 4). The Part. 4 got a birthday gift from his friends

The reason why men go to a spa for a special occasion is to treat themselves and their partners but partners firstly. So treat is the reason. On the other hand, those men who travel for work reasons they also treat themselves (P. 1; P. 7). So looks like that those who use spas as part of an occasion they have a chance to improve their partnership and bring more romanticism into the relationship. The direction of treat either goes towards partner or from the partner (but do not know whether that is necessary). Can be deleted later.

Looking at those who treat themselves in spas while travelling as a consequence. They do not build a more romantic relationship but increase their wellbeing (P.1) and enhance their physical appearance (Participant 7). In addition, some men go to a spa for relaxation purposes.

On the other hand, those who go to a spa either partly because they use the gym or while travelling, they all do that for relaxation, wellbeing and for enhancing their physical appearance. The only difference is that homosexual consumers enhance physical appearance by consuming beauty treatments, whereas heterosexual men select physical activity which stands for them as is the mean for building better looks.

While using spas facilities during the gym attendance, on the other hand men do not speak about treating themselves. They mainly see it as a form of relaxation and opportunity to enhance their wellbeing (P. 7; P. 2, P. 3; P. 6?; P. 8). So they go to the gym and then use spas afterwards for fitness and wellbeing purposes and as a result by mixing active and passive activities men achieve a balance.

While on holiday, it is more perceived as a place to relax and to treat oneself or/and the partner (P. 1; P. 6). As a consequence, relaxation enhances one's wellbeing while by treating oneself and the partner the relationship is enriched with more romanticism. The participants did not speak about romanticism except mentioning the fact that by having spa treatments they make their holiday or a weekend break more special. If it is more special, then obviously that creates a more intimate atmosphere and a closer connection with your beloved one. The idea of romanticism has been checked with the Participant 9 who confirmed that by going to a spa together and by experiencing things together the couple creates a stronger bond, for example, "It just added another element into the relationship" (P. 74). The participant mentioned also the fun factor which means that relaxation in a company of the beloved person the couple have some fun.

I also need to generalise in terms of a treat when consuming spas on holiday and as an occasion. In both cases, male consumers see spas as a treat the direction of which goes either to the partner or from the partner. In all cases, the consequence is the increased romanticism in the relationship.

Those that go to spas while travelling as part of their touristic or holidaying experience, has a motive to make their time together more special with the possibility to enrich their relationship on a romantic level. That's why many of the participants are using the word "treat". *"It's a bit more of a treat; it's a bit more of a special treat particularly. I am taking the last two times where we've actually gone – The last time we went to Liverpool and Leeds so it meant a little bit more travelling so it's a bit more special than going to a cinema or going to a theatre cause it is a longer experience"* (Interview 6, p. 24).

The word "treat" means giving oneself and/or the other person a well-deserved attention and love. Wellbeing and beautification services at spas are designed for that reason to make experience more special. It is more special because it cannot be practiced every day and something that cannot be done by yourself. By choosing to consume spas hetero-socially during the weekend break or while on vacation consumers practice escapism. Escapism is a motivation that stimulates those men in the relationship to leave the mundane reality behind. People seek something more exciting which is not part of everyday experiences because of the work and family responsibilities. Hence, spas become an escape from all the duties that need to be carried out on a daily basis. Spas offer that oasis where the everyday responsibilities and all the routine can be forgotten while immersing oneself into the realm of relaxing

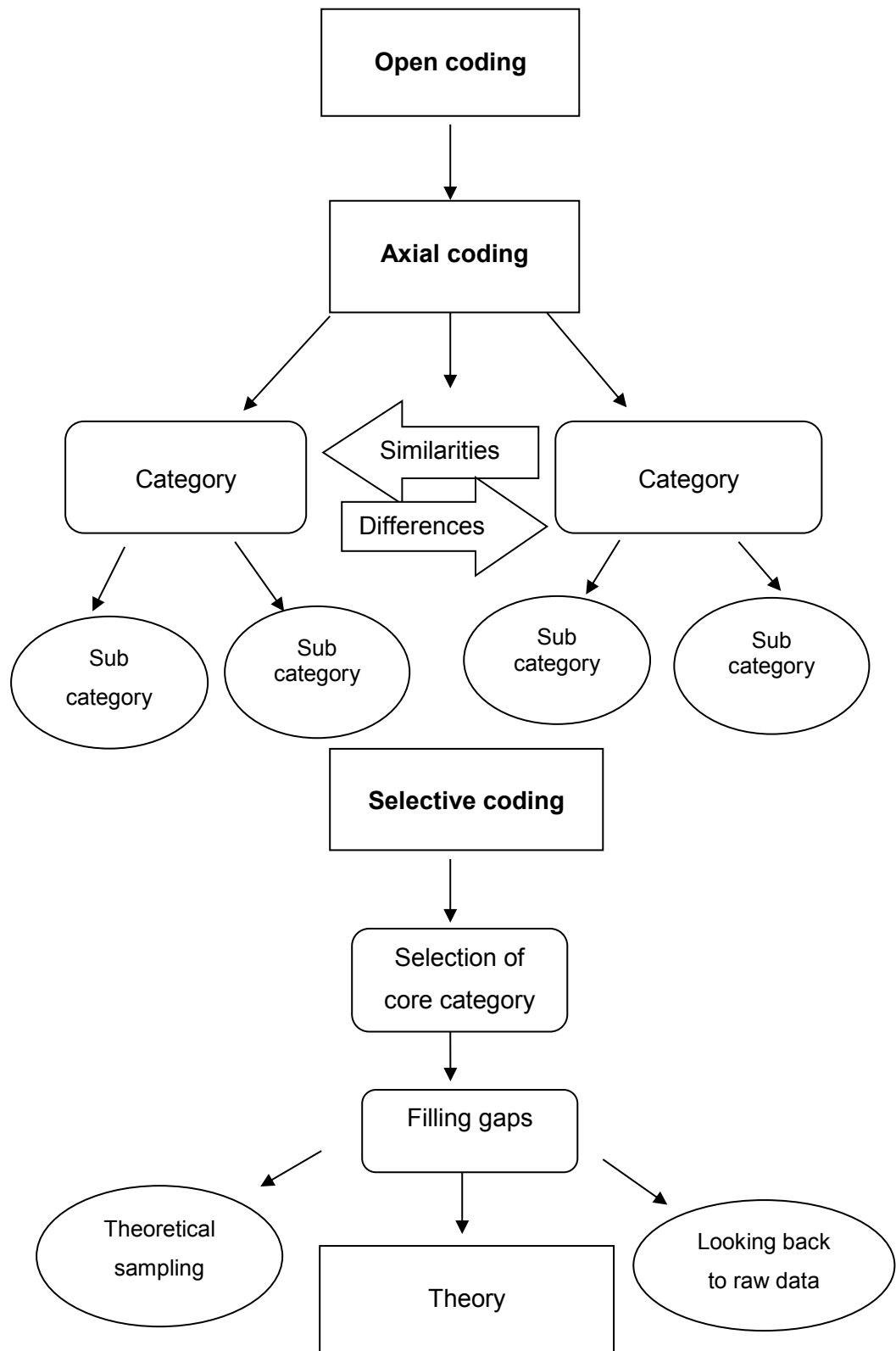
pleasures – a massage, a Jacuzzi, a steam room and other wellness and beauty services. Because of this, the wellbeing business often is associated with a treat.

People look for escapism from mundane reality in spas because they are able to relax there. They come to a spa for relaxation purposes and for treating the self and the partner. By pampering or treating themselves and by having a relaxing time together the couple escapes from the monotony and all the life duties and as a result brings more romanticism into the relationship. “I suppose with the spa – because we have got a family but they are older now – it’s generally without the kids and it’s generally without any other things to concern ourselves with other than just probably the two of us. That’s it. And relaxation so no other interference” (P. 6, p. 22). Time without interference, as the 6<sup>th</sup> participant says allows the couple to have a quality time together which cannot always be experienced because of the family and work duties. By being only the two of them they can share the attention to each other letting the feelings towards each to grow and prosper.

The concept of romanticism started to emerge during the analysis of all interviews. It played the role of consequence in the grounded theory terms. Confirmation of my assumption was sought at the 9<sup>th</sup> interview. The 9<sup>th</sup> research participant probably had the vast experience of using spas as has been seeking the fulfilment of hedonic and utilitarian needs for nearly thirty years in spas both in the North East and abroad. Most importantly he had tried spas together with friends and with the love partner hence he was able to comment whether time spent in a spa with partner had a positive effect on their relationship. “*Yeah. I think it did, yeah. It just added another element into the relationship. It was something else we have done together and we enjoyed it. And it was fun*” (P. 9, p. 74).



## Appendix E: Strauss and Corbin's (1998) coding approach



## Appendix F: Interview No. 12 for theory validation purposes

Interview text	Codes/concepts
<p><i>So I would like you to speak about your visits to spas, about your experiences of going to spas.</i></p> <p>OK. Have never been to the UK spa before.</p> <p><i>Never?</i></p> <p>No.</p> <p><i>All right.</i></p> <p>Just ... cause I'm a cabin crew so a lot of hotels have got spas in them, so probably once a week I go to one, but in different countries, not in the UK.</p> <p><i>Why haven't you been in the UK then?</i></p> <p>Never had time really. I think it's quite of a treat, isn't. It is more like a relaxation. And you get three days off in the UK, so I catch my friends instead or go for dinner, so it's not on top of my priority</p>	<p>A treat</p>

really. So.

*Oh ... because I was looking for those people who go to spas in the UK.*

Oh, really.

*Yeah, I didn't know about that.*

Oh yeah. I've been to probably about two or three in, like health spas ... in about the last five years.

*Right.*

So, can tell you about those.

*But not here?*

No, in the UK. Maybe four, five years ago. Four years ago. Yeah.

*So what kind of spas they were?*

<p>Just a health spa. So pop in for a swimming pool, so. We go for a swim and then we go for a sauna.</p> <p><i>Did you go to a gym?</i></p> <p>Yeah.</p> <p><i>Yeah?</i></p> <p>Part of the gym.</p> <p><i>So were you a gym use that time?</i></p> <p>I wasn't but my partner was.</p> <p><i>All right.</i></p> <p>So got with him. So.</p> <p><i>So how many times did you go there?</i></p>	<p>By-product. Gym</p>
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<p>About three or four. If ... same one.</p> <p><i>Right. And what kind of activities did you do there?</i></p> <p>We just came for a swim and then a spa – steam room sorry and, is it sauna?</p> <p>Yes.</p> <p>Yeah, sauna as well. And it was all we had really.</p> <p><i>Did you go for any beauty treatments?</i></p> <p>...Yeah, we did. We went, I went for a massage. A hot stone massage.</p> <p><i>Oh, nice!</i></p> <p>So yeah, was lovely. And that's it. Then went for dinner in the same place.</p> <p><i>So, did you go with your partner?</i></p>	<p>By-product</p>
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Yeah, went with my partner.	Homosocial consumption
<i>Was it male or female partner?</i>	
A male partner.	Honmosocial consumption
<i>A male partner. OK. Right. Would you have gone without him?</i>	
By myself?	
<i>Aha.</i>	
Probably not.	
Why?	
I think it's quite intimidating. Not intimidating, but with me – I am quite ... I think I would be quite intimidated to go by myself. Just a bit.	Monosocial consumption – rejection Intimidating

## Why?

Just because ... it's unknown territory almost. So I wouldn't know exactly what to do or what to ask for. So I think with the confidence of somebody else, who goes quite a bit. It's OK. So.

*Right.*

I've done now. You know what, I probably would go by myself now but then I wouldn't. I am a bit older now and I know what to do and what to ask for. So.

*Does it have anything to do with prudishness, intimacy?*

Not really. I don't think. I think it's seen as quite as feminine – things to do to go to a spa. So I think I could be quite aware that it would be probably less males there than females. And a lot of my girlfriends go to spa treatments all the time. It might could be friends and we have just met for lunch. So I am the only boy, so it means six girls and they would go to a separate area and it would be me by myself. So it's not really about fun for me, I suppose. So that's why I probably wouldn't go. I would still go but it wouldn't be on the top of my list to do.

OK. So you have noticed that kind of trend that it is a feminine activity.

## Dissonance. Unknown territory

Feminine activity

Dissonance

Rejection

<p>Yeah. It's very feminine, I think. Yeah.</p> <p><i>Why do you think men are not going there?</i></p> <p>Cause I think it's probably about pride. I think it's not something which is quite cool to say like "Dam the pub, yeah, I'm gonna go for a massage. I'm gonna go to get a spa treatment. I think it's still quite classed as feminine. So girls can go as like a girly trip, like a relaxation trip, pay for a glass of wine and then have a spa treatment, have some dinner and go home. I think it's still quite very feminine, especially in the UK, very feminine.</p> <p><i>What about this area of the UK? Like North East?</i></p> <p>North East. I think that's probably, I think it's even more feminine. I think in London, if you go further south, it is more acceptable. I think we are quite slow to adjust to that. I think as a little county in the North East, we are quite, still quite bloky and I think that's don't think that's gonna change any time soon. I think with industries we've had here, so like ... like look at Teeside all that industries they have got in Middlesbrough – we are quite slow to catch on to anything like that. I think guys still go to barbers to get their haircuts as opposed to hairdressers. So I think that's just what it's like up here in the North.</p>	<p>Feminine activity</p> <p>Regional culture</p> <p>South - acceptance</p> <p>Stagnation in gender norms</p>
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<p><i>So you don't see kind of gender converging?</i></p> <p>Yeah, definitely.</p> <p><i>Not yet?</i></p> <p>Not yet, no. I think cause I work out of London, it's completely different in London. If I lived in London, I probably would go to spas a lot more. Cause it's more acceptable, it is more ...it's more normal. It's part of their life. But we are quite slow up here to catch onto things like that.</p> <p><i>Do you share your experiences, spa experiences with other men? Do you speak about that?</i></p> <p>About going to a spa?</p> <p><i>Yes. Or that you've been at a spa?</i></p> <p>Yeah, because a lot of my friends are gay. So that's quite – it's still quite – I think in the gay community people look after themselves a lot more. So it's quite normal.</p>	<p>London</p> <p>Acceptance</p> <p>Stagnation in gender norms</p>
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<p><i>OK. But if your friend was a heterosexual?</i></p> <p>Probably not. I wouldn't ... No, I think I would be quite like "What are doing tomorrow? Oh nothing" if I was going to a spa.</p> <p><i>So you wouldn't reveal?</i></p> <p>Probably not, no.</p> <p><i>Why?</i></p> <p>Just because it's quite ... it's not embarrassing but they'd be like "Oh, what is it? Is that not what the girls go for?' and things. I think is because we are quite slow up here to understand things, so no, I think it's quite private almost. It's quite what you wanna do in your own spare time. So.</p> <p><i>So you keep it kind of as a secret?</i></p> <p>Yeah, I would do. Yeah.</p> <p><i>If you did say yes, what kind of ... would you feel that you would be kind of stigmatised?</i></p>	<p>Conflict. Dissonance. Secret</p> <p>Stigmatisation. Ridicule</p> <p>Private, intimacy</p> <p>Secret</p>
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<p>Yeah, definitely.</p> <p><i>Really?</i></p> <p>Yeah. I think if I said I was going to a spa, they'd presume I was gay or they'd presume ... I don't know, yeah. I think it's quite a girly thing to do or a gay man to have thing to do. It's not really for heterosexuals to go for. So you definitely you get a label attached to you. I presume you would anyway. I would presume as well, so. Cause it is not often you'd hear if it would be five lads going to a spa. I think that's quite an unusual stuff.</p> <p><i>Sorry how many lads?</i></p> <p>I think you like never would find a group of lads. It's quite unusual to hear about bloke going to a spa treatment whereas for a group of girls it's quite normal.</p> <p><i>OK. So it's not a group activity for men?</i></p> <p>No, I don't think so.</p>	<p>Association with gay</p> <p>Homosocial consumption. Group activity - rejection</p> <p>Homosocial consumption. Group activity - rejection</p>
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<p><i>What about after the sport, playing sport?</i></p> <p>Yeah, maybe. But a lot of places don't have that still so like I have got a brother he would go play football, but they play football quite late at night, after work, so it's probably a bit they just want to go home, to have a shower and then go home. Cause it's nearly nine o'clock at night, I suppose.</p> <p><i>Right. It's interesting because I had some other participants who said that probably men as a group would go to a spa, after playing some kind of football or other type of sport activities. But because it was just an assumption, I wanted somebody else actually to speak about that.</i></p> <p>Yeah.</p> <p><i>And you actually brought it up yourself.</i></p> <p>Yeah.</p> <p><i>So it's good. So men they wouldn't do that because obviously they?</i></p> <p>I personally don't think so. No. I think it's quite ... I think as much as we are getting quite metrosexual up here, it's not gone that far yet here. I think just recently guys are learning how to</p>	<p>Homosocial consumption. Group activity – rejection</p> <p>Metrosexual lifestyle</p>
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<p><i>Right. In terms of age, how would</i></p> <p>In terms of what sorry?</p> <p><i>In terms of age, a metrosexual would be, which age scale would you put him in?</i></p> <p>I think 25 to 35.</p> <p>25 to 35.</p> <p>Let me think, because if you look at David Beckham, he is probably nearly 40 now.</p> <p>Yes.</p> <p>And he is probably classed as being metrosexual, somebody who takes pride in his appearance, wears man products.[laughs]</p> <p><i>Right. Does he stand for you as a role model?</i></p>	<p>Age</p> <p>David Beckham Age of metrosexual</p> <p>David Beckham</p>
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<p>Not personally for me because I think he is more a model in terms of sporting and I am not very sporty. In terms of appearance – probably not, because I don't know. To me he is quite normal now I think that's what everyone is doing. I think with TV shows like "The only way is Essex" and "Made in ...", is it "The only way is Essex" or "Towie" or whatever is called?</p> <p><i>No, no, I will ask you actually to write it down for me, because I have never heard that before.</i>  <i>[gives a notepad]</i></p> <p>Yeah, "The only way is Essex"</p> <p><i>Yes please.</i></p> <p>Yes, certainly. Sorry.</p> <p><i>Is it a TV programme?</i></p> <p>Yeah, it is.</p> <p><i>Reality Show kind of?</i></p>	<p>Reality TV show</p>
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<p>Yeah. And “Made in Chelsea”.</p> <p>OK. Thank you.</p> <p>Sorry.</p> <p>Yes, fine.</p> <p>They kind of throw [unclear] it. They all very well groomed and they are a lot younger, so they are like twenty, between twenty and probably thirty. And that’s normal to them, because they are a younger generation. Whereas it’s normal to take pride in their appearance. So I think in terms of an age for metrosexual, well it’s a bit older, it’s about thirty, thirty five. So people who haven’t been brought up with it, so it’s not the normal, but people who tried to adjust to it later in life, if that makes sense.</p> <p><i>So you are saying a metrosexual is someone who hasn’t been brought up like that?</i></p> <p>No, I don’t think so, cause I think it’s quite normal now. I think if you asked to ask what the traits were for metrosexual: I think dress well, well-groomed, take care of their appearance, I think anyone who is under 25 now is a male diva. So I think it’s quite normal.</p>	<p>Reality TV show</p> <p>Age of metrosexual</p> <p>Body aestheticisation</p>
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<p>Yes.</p> <p>Whereas maybe ten years ago, it wasn't as normal. So I think that's where the labels come from. So people who haven't quite adjusted to it, who are changing now. Say someone like a bloke he was thirty, he maybe five years ago he would never wear a moisturiser, he would never dress in trendy clothes but now he does because that's almost allowed now. It's not stereotypical anymore. So.</p> <p><i>So what was a stereotypical perception of a man?</i></p> <p>Of a man nowadays, I think it's hard to – I don't is a stereotypical type of a man now. I think is ... it's so diverse. I think. I think ten years ago, if you dressed trendly, if you took care in your appearance, had a nice hairstyle you were classed as being gay, whereas now that's not assumed anymore, because of programmes like this. So I don't think now you can say what a stereotypical man is.</p> <p><i>Do these programmes influence you in some ways?</i></p> <p>Not for me personally, because of my job. I am a cabin crew. We have to take care of our</p>	<p>Age. Influence of metrosexuality</p> <p>Gayness</p> <p>Media influence</p>
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appearance. So for me, I have been a cabin crew for six years now. So I started since I was eighteen.

*It's a long time.*

I've got taught from day one that this is how you take care: you moisturise, you have nice hair, you ... and then the majority of men who are cabin crew, they are gay. So you learn how to dress [impossible to hear because of noise]. And then I did a degree in fashion design.

*All right.*

So I was, there was only me and two other boys on the course and forty girls, so we learned how to dress well as well, so. I think there is two extremes almost. Say, there is the guys who take it one step too far, he almost not dressed like a woman but would wear like a make-up and wear outrageous clothes and there is normal guys now, who will go to sort of River Island or Top Man and buy a trendy pair of jeans and a nice shirt and will go to a hairdressers' and get a haircut and put product on it and it's seen as quite normal now. In younger ages, so thirty and below, whereas the guy who was thirty-three maybe, he wouldn't almost be expected to dress like that because that's not his era, I suppose.

Job influence

## Gender convergence

OK.

I think girls as well, like partners almost expect it in younger generation. So maybe twenty-five year old would expect a partner to dress well, to keep his appearance up to shape, whereas maybe somebody who was thirty-five, maybe the partner wouldn't want that. Maybe they quite like them not to shave or to have stubble on, not dress trendy.

*OK. Do you have any role model?*

Me? ... In terms of what – in terms of career or in terms of ...

*In terms of appearance probably. I am more interested in that.*

Appearance. George Lamb. I think he is quite ... he is probably a good description of being a metrosexual.

*Who is sorry?*

He is a presenter. He is about forty. He is ... the younger one, cause his dad, somebody Lamb – he is a presenter as well. So he is the son and he's got cool hair, dress trendy, cause it's faultless,

He is a presenter. He is about forty. He is ... the younger one, cause his dad, somebody Lamb – he is a presenter as well. So he is the son and he's got cool hair, dress trendy, cause it's faultless,

## Role model

so appears like he doesn't make any effort. He does.

*So does, in some ways, do the media affect your perception of masculinity? Influence in the way, do you feel any influence from the media in terms of how men should behave and what is masculine and so on?*

Yeah, probably, I think that the media is getting really good now. I think back to maybe even five years ago if you read a gossip magazine, who is the worst dressed and the best dressed, that's normally would be that stereotypical for women, but now I think men could appear there as well. So I think men have got more pressure to dress well. I think even shops like "Next", which typically was for the older man, not for older man but for a more mature man. I think even that's now become a trendy shop – it's about looking at future trends and trying to capture them. I think that will be if somebody who was my age would say that shopped at "Marks&Spencers", that's probably not cool. It's probably quite a bit "Oh, what you are doing?" Whereas probably ten years ago was quite acceptable to shop at "Marks&Spencers" being thirty.

So, you don't shop there? [laughs]

No, I don't. It's not for me.

Media influence

Social pressure. Body aestheticisation

Promoting physical attractiveness.

<p><i>[laughs]. Right. So you agree that media actually shapes</i></p> <p>Definitely!</p> <p><i>Shapes our understanding of masculinity.</i></p> <p>Yeah, even if the male population didn't read the media, the female population probably would read it, especially magazines, so they may have got a perception of how they would see the male popularity to be. So even if it's not affecting the male population directly, it is in a way for you guys, females.</p> <p><i>But what about yourself? Do you?</i></p> <p>Yeah, probably, I think ... media, yeah magazines, so if I was to read ... so what I was reading yesterday ... like one of the Sunday magazines from a newspaper, that has like gift ideas for men and that would something that is quite trendy, quite ... metrosexual. They are trying to advertise moisturisers, shaving equipment and then you'd be like, "Oh, so am I expected to shave every day?" And it's almost yeah, you get pressure from there "Oh yeah, I should! That's what is normal, that's what is cool nowadays", I suppose. So yeah, I think it's done very cleverly. I think it works, it does work. So yeah, even if you don't think directly, you've been persuaded by media you are. So</p>	<p>Media influence. Pressure form female partners</p> <p>Media influence. Pressure Promoting physical attractiveness</p>
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<p>even adverts, there is a lot more male grooming products on TV now: electronic razors, aftershaves and male department store, like Top Man, they're all advertised regularly now which maybe ten years ago they wouldn't be.</p> <p><i>So the attention is focused now on men, it's shifting on men, isn't?</i></p> <p>Yeah, I think it is still a lot focused on women, obviously. I think, it's probably not quite 50/50, but maybe 30/80. So men are getting there. I think it's, the penny's finally dropping that there is a market out there for men. I think from my point of view, from my background in fashion design, men's' wear become a lot more popular. Say men would like the diversity to dress well – they would like more choice of clothing which never used to be the case. So normally you'd go to fashion school and you would do women's wear because it was where the jobs were. Whereas now there is a lot more men's wear designers out there who are trying to change the way men dress.</p> <p><i>Right. So do you agree that media in some ways educate the male market?</i></p> <p>Yeah, completely.</p> <p><i>How to groom and how to look after themselves?</i></p>	<p>Time scale</p> <p>Promoting physical attractiveness</p> <p>Gender convergence</p>
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<p>Yeah, definitely. That's probably the main way that men are educated through it. If you looked at, if you got a magazine and there is an interview with David Beckham in it, you think, age now of David Beckham, looking lovely and at the bottom it would say "Dressed in Debenham's latest collection" and that was normally associated with women, whereas now it's just at men as well. So a man could pick up a magazine, "Oh I like that shirt! Where is it from?" And they would tell him. Whereas that was never normally the case.</p> <p><i>So do you feel the pressure actually to look after yourself?</i></p> <p>Yeah definitely! I think if you took a sample of a hundred people in Eldon Square, a hundred men, eighty percent would all have looked after themselves: had stylish haircuts, would wear trendy clothes. I think it's like almost expected now. Especially the younger generation, so.</p> <p><i>What about the older generation?</i></p> <p>Maybe not as much, so ... let's say thirty-five plus it's not probably a necessity anymore. I don't think they feel that pressure, cause they have never grown up with it and their friends probably don't do it so why would they do it? whereas the younger generation –yeah, it's quite normal now.</p>	<p>Educating</p> <p>Pressure. Body aestheticisation. Promoting physical attractiveness Younger generation</p> <p>Younger generation</p>
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<p><i>But don't you think that even the older generation would be affected by the media?</i></p> <p>Yeah, but ... it depends who are their role models are. They have got different role models to our generation. So ... like my dad, he is sixty, he wouldn't have, like spending a lot of time getting ready. He would probably look at somebody like Jeremy Clarkson. His role model. He behaves exactly the same. He wouldn't take loads of time getting ready, he wouldn't wear fashion forward clothing. He just wears normal clothes. I think the media pin down on the generation they want to using the role model. So have the older man, they probably they don't care. It's not for them. So I think the younger generation they have been brought up with that. So I think that's how it works.</p> <p><i>Does the media promote the celebrity syndrome?</i></p> <p>Yeah, I think that's a big problem. I think they, it's hard to ... I think ... look at Rihanna, for example, the singer. She's seen as being the role model but she is ... even more realistically Miley Cyrus she was a teenage, she was on TV, teenage, children's TV and now she is dressing inappropriately, doing inappropriate things and she is still classed as a role model. And I think the media influenced that as well by publicising her all the time in magazines and on TV. The younger people are gonna want to be like her. And that's not a role model. That's how it happens nowadays.</p> <p><i>But do you see celebrity syndrome in a way that not exactly wanting to look like that particular</i></p>	<p>Producing role models</p> <p>Role models</p>
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<p><i>person but in a way that you want to look like perfect, immaculate like celebrities.</i></p> <p>Yeah, I think. Personally, not as much anymore only because we have got the knowledge of it, so I think if I have picked up a copy of Heat magazine or like a fashion or a celebrity gossip magazine, I would know if they've posed for a photo shop, photoshoot sorry, if their pictures have been photoshopped and that's not what they actually look like. They would get their clothes provided by a company and I think that's become – I think people recognise that now. Especially in magazines such as Cosmopolitan, they do features for girls and guys wearing no make-up and this is what I look like. So I think that kind of stopped that almost. I think celebrities almost stopped doing that themselves as well. Like they may try to promote as well that they are not perfect. I think that stopped in the right direction, so I think the celebrity state was quite glitz and glamour ten years ago and now it's almost quite normal. So I think it has stopped a little bit in my opinion. People don't look at up to the selves "Oh, I would like to look like them", because they know it that that picture in a magazine is not what they look like. So, they might think "Oh, she's got lovely hair" and "I could go to get my hair like her" but they wouldn't look like her exactly.</p> <p><i>But would you kind of classed that a trend to look after yourself as a celebrity syndrome? Like wanting to look immaculate, wanting to be perfect – dress well, and groom well and be like almost a celebrity in some ways.</i></p>	<p>Unrealistic ideal</p> <p>Source: celebrities, media</p> <p>Level of unrealistic ideal</p>
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<p>I think</p> <p><i>Not associating yourself with that particular person but</i></p> <p>Yeah, yeah but become well-groomed and look after yourself. I don't know because ... not, probably not. Only because I don't think we don't know what the celebrity does to look after themselves. Cause I don't know what he is, David Beckham, I don't know his daily routine, what moisturiser he uses, what hair products he uses, I don't know where he shops. I think influences gone a lot on celebrities I think that's all at the ... almost like a general public and I might see somebody on the street "Oh, I love what they are wearing!" or "Let's go get that". I think a lot more for fashion magazines, they have got more pictures of normal people and they are looking more at high street shops. So I think it's, I don't think it's the celebrity effect has got a lot of influence as what used to. I think it did have, but not anymore. I don't know, maybe because I did fashion design, so I am aware of all. So there maybe for somebody who was not aware, they might say that Rihanna is the ideal woman and they would like to look like her, get haircut like her, get a tattee like her. But not so much anymore, I don't think. So I think it's probably changed dramatically.</p> <p><i>Do you feel kind of sociocultural norms [influence] how men should behave in this part of the country?</i></p>	<p>Media influence. Social pressure Promoting physical attractiveness</p>
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<p>Yeah, I think the social perception of men has changed completely. So I think, for example, you have probably seen this as well when going out in Newcastle. Men typically would drink a kind of lager but now they might drink a cocktail.</p> <p><i>Really?</i></p>	<p>Gender convergence</p>
<p>Which will be seen as a feminine drink, but that's probably quite acceptable nowadays.</p> <p><i>I haven't noticed that.</i></p>	<p>Gender convergence</p>
<p>Yeah, if you like, especially with bars like Floritas and Revolution bar where the cocktails are quite big, I think it's quite accepted now. It's not frowned upon whereas ten years ago if a guy came in and said "Oh, I will drink a cocktail" maybe it would be like "Wow, what are you doing?!" whereas now is quite normal. And hairdressers as well – typically for women but now the majority of men may get their haircut at hairdressers as opposed to at barbers. So I think socially men are changing but.</p> <p><i>So that's kind of a new perception of a man, isn't it?</i></p> <p>Yeah, definitely!.</p>	<p>Gender convergence</p>

*Do you still feel that there is an old perception of a man, the traditional perception of a man and does that clash with the media influence?*

I think, I think it's very split. So you have got the older generation of men who they not gonna change their old ways. They have got their - they would look at the media perceptions in a different way. So I might look at a different celebrity to what they may look at. So I think the media are quite clever with that. I think they know there's two different types of men, there is the modern day man which is probably like me, myself and it's more like my dad, who is an old fashioned man. So there is two different stereotypes now and I think we would both look at the media differently, so he might look ... he might look at ... like pictures of a man wearing clothes that not what, I might not look at it. Like "Oh, I would love that!" whereas I "Oh, that's lovely jumper, let's go get that", I think it's two different perceptions now. It is a traditional man and a modern day man.

*Right. What about in this part of the country? Do you see a trend?*

In the North?

*In the North. Yes. What is kind of*

Two types of masculinity

<p>Slowly</p> <p><i>The perception of masculinity.</i></p> <p>I think that's problem the same. I think ... in the North East it's becoming quite trendy in the North East and I think it's quite open to adaption. So especially with two big universities – so Northumbria and Newcastle attracting students from down South. They are coming up now and they are influencing people who live in the North East. So I think their influences are a bit more fun. Old influences of the North East as well. So even if it's, I think it's quite old fashioned up here, that's slowly starting to break away. So</p> <p><i>But do you feel that kind of tradition, to stick to that old tradition or a traditional perception of masculinity?</i></p> <p>I think that's probably going a little bit. I think that ... yeah, I think that you can say tradition that's endless. For example, ten years ago can you imagine in the North East if a woman proposed to a man, that would be crazy whereas now that wouldn't be an odd thing. I think we are slowly getting terms to it. I think traditions are slowly dying, which is good. I think ... it's about time like ...well look at the gay bars, that would be quite frowned upon ten years ago and now there is a massive gay community in Newcastle. So.</p>	<p>Breaking traditions</p> <p>Freedom of behaviour. Time span</p> <p>Breaking traditions/dying traditions</p> <p>Timespan</p>
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<p><i>Things are changing.</i></p> <p>Things are changing up here. Yeah.</p> <p>OK.</p> <p><i>Going back – actually talking about beautification</i></p> <p>Yeah</p> <p><i>Do you do any kind of beauty treatments?</i></p> <p>I get my eyebrows threaded ... probably once a month.</p> <p><i>Frowded?</i></p> <p>Threaded.</p> <p><i>Ah, threaded, oh yeas.</i></p>	<p>Beauty practices. Improving physical appearance</p>
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<p>Get haircut every four weeks. What else? It's probably it for me. Then if I am away, I would go for a massage once a month. I don't think I would ... I would never go get a pedicure or manicure or anything like that. I don't think.</p> <p><i>Because some men associate this activity with gay people</i></p> <p>Yes definitely.</p> <p><i>But you wouldn't do that.</i></p> <p>... I think ... I think going that to do it in public probably maybe. I think a lot of men will do it behind closed curtains or closed doors. So there is a lot of male grooming products on the market. Like waxing strips and body trimmers and I heard that's becoming more ... accepted almost to say that they are probably too proud and too embarrassed to go do it externally, so they are probably doing it at home, away from the eyes. So I might go and get my eyebrows threaded in the Metrocentre or in Newcastle, whereas a heterosexual male might get it done in the house, their girlfriend might look for their eyebrows out. So we still got the end result but mine has been done in public and his hasn't.</p>	<p>Conflict. Secret</p> <p>Dissonance. Embarrassment.</p> <p>Grooming practices. Execution – public</p> <p>Execution – self-service. Home</p>
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<p><i>Right. Did you do any other beauty treatments in a spa?</i></p> <p>No.</p> <p><i>Except the massage?</i></p> <p>No, I don't think so.</p> <p><i>No. Why?</i></p> <p>Cause I'm not used to that, I think. So ... my ... cause I suppose my friends have never done it. So I wouldn't know what to expect, what to ask for. Whereas yes so, I don't even know what they do, what is classed as spa treatments nowadays. So, is it like facials and ...?</p> <p><i>Yes, facials, beauty treatments – pedicures, manicures.</i></p> <p>No, I went – I have got a friend who works in Clarins. She gave me a facial once but I've got quite a sensitive skin so I was allergic to it. So then I would never go back but that's done in public. So that's done in Fenwick's, in front of everybody.</p>	<p>Dissonance. Unknown territory</p> <p>Facial. Execution – public</p>
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<p><i>How did it feel?</i></p> <p>Felt like I was on a show a little bit – cause everybody was looking at me. So you have to be comfortable in yourself to get it done. I don't think a stereotypical man would go to get it done because of their opinion on what they would feel if somebody else got it done. Same as eyebrow threading. So where I get it done is classed like shop window, so everyone can see it. So I think it's ... I think as much as guys want to look their best, they are still quite proud of how they do it. And I think there is not a lot of ... I think for me as well to say I wouldn't know what to ask for if for a spa treatment. I think that demonstrates and shows these products for male population it's not almost ... it's not marketed towards them, to men. Because we don't, we are not used to it. So, you would never get, example, a Groupon. It's always got spa treatments on and if you look at the imagery to go with it – it's always a woman, never a man. So I think that just shows that's always aimed towards women.</p> <p><i>It's marketed at women.</i></p> <p>Yeah, yeah. However, if it had a man on it, that might be more ... a man would look and [say] "Oh!"</p> <p><i>Encouraging kind of.</i></p>	<p>Dissonance.      Masking      femininity. Grooming at home</p> <p>Insufficient marketing</p> <p>Stagnation in marketing Feminine activity</p> <p>necessity for change in marketing</p>
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<p>lot different to “Yeah, I gonna go to a spa and get a spa treatment”. So I think it’s very ... I think the wording is very important and I think if it was a male spa, which was ... which would take femininity profiles and stereotypical identity away from it, then it would be more encouraging. But at the minute it’s still classed as being very feminine.</p> <p><i>Would you go to spa with another man?</i></p> <p>Yeah, I would. Yeah, well I have done that in the past.</p> <p><i>Yeah, with your partner.</i></p> <p>Yeah.</p> <p><i>Would you go with a heterosexual man?</i></p> <p>Yeah, if they wanted to go. I think that would be more convincing them that it’s OK.</p> <p><i>Sorry?</i></p> <p>I think it would more convincing them to go.</p>	<p>Feminine activity</p> <p>Homosocial consumption</p> <p>Hesitation from heterosexuals</p> <p>Hesitation from heterosexuals</p>
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<p><i>Right. It would be difficult. How well do you need to know that person before inviting to go to a spa?</i></p> <p>Quite well I think, would be a friend. Someone, whom I would have known for a while.</p> <p><i>You wouldn't offer to somebody else?</i></p> <p>No, I don't think so. The thing is it's quite ... I think if want us ... I don't ... it's a weird question because I think girlfriends go all the time. You probably don't have to know each other. I think to go with another male it's quite private. It's quite ... intimate almost. And I think they wouldn't like, less so like that. It depends on what treatment you had as well. So and I think for the male, for the male population it's probably seen as being quite couply. So, massages on holiday – you get couple massages and you go with your partner whereas in the UK men may have not got used to that yet. So.</p> <p><i>So we have got a perception that is going to spas is a feminine activity.</i></p> <p>Yeah.</p> <p><i>That's why men they don't go actually.</i></p>	<p>Homosocial consumption. Friendly relationship</p> <p>Dissonance intimate</p>
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<p>Yeah.</p> <p><i>They don't see it as a leisure activity for themselves. So that's one kind of version. Do you think there is something to do with prudishness? That British men are prudish?</i></p> <p>I think British men are prudes.</p> <p><i>Are they?</i></p> <p>Very prude, yeah. And I think it's almost like ... yes they are quite ... I think ... yeah they are. I am quite prude.</p> <p>Are you?</p> <p>Yeah. I am quite, I don't like talking about things which would be quite ... I don't know, say I get embarrassed easily and I think as far as ... it's a funny environment, isn't it. It's a lot of – you down to a minimum clothes, you are getting a massage which come seen as intimate, intimate even. So I think yeah. I think men are quite prudish, especially British men. And I think that won't change. I think it's always gonna be the case.</p>	<p>Prudishness</p> <p>Prudishness</p> <p>Prudishness</p> <p>Intimacy</p> <p>Prudishness</p>
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<p><i>Really?</i></p> <p>Unless it will be worded differently. So it's nothing sexual or it's not intimate to get a sport massage, in my opinion, but to go to a spa and get a spa treatment is quite personal, quite intimate. So yeah, I don't think, I can't see, but personally I can't see it changing.</p> <p><i>So you kind of, you have kind of a conflict when you need to go to a spa or when you have to go to a spa?</i></p> <p>Yeah.</p> <p><i>Or if you wanted to go to a spa here in this part of the country.</i></p> <p>Yeah</p> <p><i>You would be in conflict.</i></p> <p>Yeah, I think so. I think it can be a bit like "Oh, do I actually need to go?" I think ... I think ... a lot more places are doing spa treatments: gyms. I think they started doing, I don't know.</p>	<p>Masking femininity</p> <p>Stagnancy in gender norms</p> <p>Conflict. Hesitation</p>
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*Sorry?*

Gyms, you can probably get a massage in the gym. I think that's different to going to a spa. So I think that men may not necessarily have the spa treatments but it's worded differently. I don't think that's ... I can never see a group of well three guys going to a spa. I don't think that would happen. Three guys might go to the gym and then have a massage after the gym, because it is not seen feminine, because they have gone for a workout, which is quite masculine and then relax after the workout. That's quite normal, but I don't think, I think the word spa is aid for girls, aimed at women. Not men.

*So it has to be changed.*

Yeah, I think so, yeah.

*OK, thank you. That was an interesting interview.*

Was it?

*Yes. [laughs] you gave me lots of good thoughts.*

Masking femininity



OK. Is that gone off what everyone else's said?

*The only, can I switch it off yes?*

Yeah, cause you can.

[speaks to the participant and introduces the theory]

*But my theory was that there is kind of a social pressure in this part of the country and that comes from sociocultural norms, from the expectation of society, what a man should look like, that he should still behave in a traditional way – being a breadwinner, be ... look after the family, engage in sporty activities. So that's a traditional perception of a man. And obviously that type of a man wouldn't do beauty treatments and so on, so wouldn't go to a spa. But then there is another kind of social pressure which comes from the media*

To look good.

*Yeah, to look good. To influence us, to look after ourselves. So it's kind of two different social forces and a man is in between. It's quite complicated, isn't it?*

<p>Yeah it is. I think you have got the ... yeah it's what you just said – you've got the traditional pressure to go and be a man and have a job which brings a lot of money to support the family, but now you have got a social influence to look good and dress well. It's almost two different things. It's like a traditional man, who is very work focused, who is manly [chuckles], who isn't so influenced about how they appear but now you have got a younger generation which is coming in who are all about how they look, what clothes they wear, where they shop. In, maybe in ten years' time when they first get their job, they not gonna be under pressure to be the breadwinner. And I think where we are now, it's ... we are in the middle, aren't we and we have got two separate worlds coming together.</p> <p>Yes.</p> <p>It would be interesting to see what happens with it.</p> <p><i>Yes. So that's why men they kind of feel that kind of pressure.</i></p> <p>Yeah.</p> <p><i>It affects their behaviour as consumers, how they consume spas, in particular.</i></p>	<p>Pressure. Sociocultural norms</p> <p>Pressure. Mass media. Promoting physical attractiveness.</p> <p>Pressure. Sociocultural norms</p> <p>Social pressure</p>
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<p>I think that would be different for a gay couple, because they are both men. So you need to draw a line, in fact as well, like say in the gay community, I don't suppose it's gonna be a traditional approach because being in a relationship, a man being in a relationship with a man or a woman with a woman, is not seen as traditional. So that's almost lost that side of it.</p> <p><i>But in relation to spas because my research focuses on spas and how that affects - these social pressures affect men's attitude to spas. So you see there is a traditional perception even for a gay not to use spas, because you kind of you don't feel comfortable.</i></p> <p>Yeah ... yeah I see that. But I think maybe I am more prudish as a gay man so I think a lot of my friends who are gay which use a spa without no problem because they want to look their best or they quite like the idea of relaxing and having a relaxation treatment whereas I am not. I am more traditional in the sense of that. So I think in the [unclear] changing which is just gay couple's and gay men and they go to those all the time. I am not comfortable to go to that because that is not who I am like. So I think there is lots of areas where you can focus on. So for me, I am probably in the middle. Yeah, I want to look the best and want to look like somebody in the magazine as such, not a celebrity though, look at somebody who dresses well or have nice hair. But I don't want to be seen as somebody who is going for feminine treatments all the time – go to spas and like. And then maybe an older generation they don't see the desire to look like that somebody like that – so they</p>	<p>Dissonance</p> <p>Uncomfortable</p> <p>Conflict</p>
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<p>would never go to a spa. So it would be interesting to see someone who is maybe five years younger than me to see if they would go to a spa, because I think they probably would.</p> <p><i>They won't?</i></p> <p>I think they would. I think, yeah I think they would be more open to get a treatment, because I think it's all ... cause this metrosexual label is quite new. It has been around for three maybe three or four years</p> <p><i>Could be yes.</i></p> <p>And I think it's still quite new. So almost my generation have adapted to it, so I was probably twenty one when it came in cause as I learnt how to dress differently, how to look after myself and it would be frowned upon almost for – there was no products on the market for guys back then, five years ago. You would never go and get man waxing strips. It was never heard of five years ago but now it's quite common. That's so that is a big change and that's almost ... it's getting towards treatments but in the comfort of your own home, away from the eyes. So haven't got [unclear] doing it and that's a massive step from nothing to something so it would be interesting to see how that could then move onto something like a spa treatment, getting it done professionally.</p>	<p>Recent changes</p> <p>Dissonance</p>
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<p><i>Right.</i></p> <p>I think that would be quite interesting to see.</p> <p><i>OK. So did you go to a spa here in the North East?</i></p> <p>Yeah, next to the airport.</p> <p><i>Right. OK. Was it part of the gym?</i></p> <p>It's part of the gym. It is a social – it is hotel as well, they have a gym and a spa facility.</p> <p><i>Right. OK.</i></p> <p>Do you know what, that was about three or four years ago. My friends asked me ... two weeks ago there is an offer on at Hilton, In Newcastle for a spa treatment and she asked me what to get for my birthday. I wouldn't still haven't said yes or now, because I am still quite ... it's still a bit of an issue. It's me and my friend are going - me and two girlfriends are going. It's almost cause it's so strict to being unisex, not unisex, sorry like sex ways, so females one way and males different way. It's not seen as being social. That's not a social activity, so you go and so the two girls will go together and</p>	<p>By-product</p>
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I'll go by myself. So it's almost like if I want to have a social gathering, I wouldn't go to a spa, I would go

*Why do you say it's separated?*

That's just my perception of it I think.

*Cause you know, obviously if you go for a massage then you would be in a separate room.*

Yeah

*But then all activities are used together, consumed socially*

Like swimming?

*Yes swimming and sitting in the Jacuzzi or in a sauna.*

You see I've never seen, I never saw that. That's just my perception.

*No no. You can go together actually, do things together.*

<p>That's quite not acceptable how it is not promoted</p> <p><i>Changing rooms obviously would be separate, yes.</i></p> <p>So it's quite not acceptable how it is promoted very well.</p> <p><i>Aha</i></p> <p>Because I would think that it would be men one way and women the other way. And people like I didn't know that. I think that's' probably one of the reasons as well where cause if people knew that, I think they would be more influenced to go. Even couples – a boy and the girl would probably go together then.</p> <p><i>So you think it is not well marketed?</i></p> <p>Oh no.</p> <p><i>Really?</i></p>	<p>Necessity for better marketing</p>
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<p>Oh, yeah really badly marketed. And I think if it was to ... I think it's probably quite a big market in the UK, it could be a big market in the UK to encourage men to get beauty treatments in spas.</p> <p><i>Could be a big market?</i></p> <p>Could be a huge market. But it's not because they don't ... I think well quite an example there I just presumed it was very separated, very ... so I think if people knew that and</p> <p><i>No no, you can use all the facilities together except the massage. If you had a massage, that would be in a separate room.</i></p> <p>That's understandable. I didn't know that.</p> <p><i>Yeah.</i></p> <p>That's interesting.</p> <p><i>So you can bravely go with your girlfriends. [laughs]</i></p> <p>Yeah, I'll might. I might consider it more now.</p>	<p>Necessity for better marketing</p>
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Yes.

And yeah, could go and fine. I still think that underlying if the spa treatments are still quite feminine. treatments wise, so I might go this month with my friend, go for a swim, get a massage and I will never get a treatment as such. I don't think I would get like a face mask or anything. Just because that's still classed as being very feminine.

*So even you yourself being gay you don't want that label.*

No, yeah.

*You are afraid of that label.*

Not afraid of it. I am just a bit ... I wouldn't know what to expect. I don't think I would enjoy it, I'd be a bit fidgety. What's going on because I have not been brought up with it whereas girls are quite used to things like face masks. They can go to Boots and get face masks whereas guys never do that. So I think like I said before like massages are quite seen as being unisex but it's worded differently. So I think if go back and say I gonna go for a massage, but the guy would say "I going for a sport's massage". So

Dissonance

## Masking femininity

Dissonance

## Unknown territory

## Masking femininity

[laughs]

I think it's like that still and ...

*Right. Interesting. Very interesting. Thank you very much.*

Pleasure.

## Appendix G: Questionnaire after piloting

### Interviewee's profile

This short questionnaire is part of the Edita Petrylaite's PhD project that aims to find out how the changing perception of masculinity influences male spa consumers' behaviour. By completing this questionnaire, you would provide additional information that could be used to enhance the research findings. Information provided by you will be used strictly confidentially and anonymously and for research purposes only.

#### 1. Nationality

British ☐

Other (please specify) .....

#### 2. Age

18-21 ☐

22-25 ☐

26-30 ☐

31-40 ☐

41-50 ☐

51-60 ☐

61+ ☐

#### 3. Marital status

Single ☐

Living with a partner ☐

Married/Civil partnership ☐

Separated/Divorced ☐

Widowed ☐

#### 4. Sexual orientation

Heterosexual/straight ☐

Gay ☐

Bisexual ☐

Other (please state) .....

Prefer not to state ☐

**5. Education**

- High school or equivalent ☐
- College ☐
- University/Higher Education ☐
- Postgraduate ☐
- Postgraduate Research ☐
- Other, please state .....

**6. Occupation**

.....

**7. Job role**

- Staff ☐
- Middle manager ☐
- Manager ☐
- Other, please state.....

**8. Range of annual income**

- Less than £25,000 ☐
- £25,000 – £49,999 ☐
- £50,000 – £74,999 ☐
- £75,000 – £99,999 ☐
- £100,000 + ☐
- Prefer not to state ☐

**7. Postcode** (first half or whole)

.....

- Prefer not to state ☐

**Thank you for completing the questionnaire.**

Your anonymity will be assured and the responses provided will be used confidentially. No personal information will be passed on to other agencies.

## Appendix H: Organisation Informed Consent Form



### RESEARCH **ORGANISATION** INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Newcastle Business School

University of Northumbria

Completion of this form is required whenever research is being undertaken by NBS staff or students within any organisation. This applies to research that is carried out on the premises, or is about an organisation, or members of that organisation or its customers, as specifically targeted as subjects of research.

The researcher must supply an explanation to inform the organisation of the purpose of the study, who is carrying out the study, and who will eventually have access to the results. In particular issues of anonymity and avenues of dissemination and publications of the findings should be brought to the organisations' attention.

Researcher's Name: \_\_\_\_\_Edita Petrylaite\_\_\_\_\_

Student ID No. (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Statement:

#### **Research purpose:**

The aim of the doctoral study is to investigate the recently evolved UK spa consumer and his motives for services enhancing one's physical appearance and wellbeing. This will produce up-to-date knowledge about whether current perceptions of masculinity influence male consumer behaviour. The final goal of this PhD study is to create a theory about motives that can later be applied in practice by spa and beauty businesses to create products and services matching the needs of the new male spa visitor. Data for the study will be collected in spas located in the North East of England. In return for their cooperation, the spa companies would be offered a free copy of the final PhD dissertation.

#### **Research participants:**

Male spa consumers will be approached and invited to take part in the qualitative research. Potentially, spa business staff will be able to notify the researcher in advance when a male visitor has booked a treatment. This could save the researcher's time and would reduce travelling expenses. During interviews men will be asked to describe what is being classed as masculine from their and society's point of view. In addition, male research participants will be required to explain their key reasons for selecting services that can improve their physical image and wellness. Given that the objective of this PhD study is to develop a theory, some interviewees will be contacted again to provide more or other information, which will be used to support the emerging hypothesis. Only those research participants who

give their consent to participate at the later stage of the research will be contacted.

**Research methods:**

It is anticipated that two qualitative research methods will be used: interviews and field notes. Prior to data collection, each individual will be given an Informed Consent Form to sign where a brief explanation of the research purpose, data collection process and analysis will be provided, including the details of data storage and use. The interviews will be recorded with a digital audio recording device and then transcribed.

In addition to direct approaches to spa customers, a “snowball” sampling method will also be used in this study, as it will assist the researcher to get access to other individuals for further information. Research participants will be asked to direct the researcher to other places or people that could be particularly relevant for the study.

**Research location:**

Data collection will take place on the premises of spa businesses only after the Organisation Informed Consent Form and the Individual Informed Consent Form have been signed by the spa business management team and the prospective research participant respectively. It is anticipated that interviews for theory development will be conducted in either the same spa or other public and safe location secure and convenient to both the candidate and the researcher. The spa or other business management will be asked for permission to interview the research participants in a quiet area or in a one-to-one room. This will ensure privacy, anonymity and confidentiality of the male informants and their disclosed information. The preference will be expressed to the managers that the venue for data collection would be located not far from their or staff offices. This will enable the research to seek help if necessary. In addition, the researcher will arrive to the interviews accompanied by a friend who will be waiting outside the room nearby. As this might not always be possible, the business management will be notified in advance about the time of the interviews so the researcher could call for help in an emergency.

**Time commitment:**

Interviews are expected to last between 30 – 60 min. The research participants will be re-contacted later to review the accuracy of the transcribed and analysed data to avoid misinterpretation. Data coding and derived meanings will be given to the supervisory team for verification purposes.

**Anonymity:**

Interviews will be anonymous. The research participants' identities will not be revealed and kept under a different name or number. Other names and places mentioned during the interviews will not appear in a text.

**Confidentiality:**

An electronic version of the data gathered will be stored securely on the computer, whereas hard copies of it will be placed in a locked cabinet at the Newcastle Business School. The identities of individuals as well as the names of places and people mentioned in the text will not be disclosed to other parties neither in speech

nor in writing.

**Research dissemination:**

The data gathered and its analysis will be disseminated in the following ways: presented at the internal and external conferences, published in various journals or introduced in a variety of other public events.

Any organisation manager or representative who is empowered to give consent may do so here:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Position/Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Organisation Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

If the organisation is NBS please completed the following:

Start/End Date of Research / Consultancy project:	Start: End:
Programme  Year  Sample to be used: seminar group, entire year etc.	
<i>Has Programme Director/Leader, Module Tutor being consulted, informed.</i>	

Anonymity must be offered to the organisation if it does not wish to be identified in the research report. Confidentiality is more complex and cannot extend to the markers of student work or the reviewers of staff work, but can apply to the published outcomes. If confidentiality is required, what form applies?

- ☐ No confidentiality required
- ☐ Masking of organisation name in research report
- ☐ No publication of the research results without specific organisational consent
- ☐ Other by agreement as specified by addendum

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

This form can be signed via email if the accompanying email is attached with the signer's personal email address included. The form cannot be completed by phone, rather should be handled via post.

## Appendix I: Individual Informed Consent Form



Newcastle Business School

Informed Consent Form for research participants

Title of Study:	Postmodern concepts of masculinity and male customer motivation in contemporary British spas
Person(s) conducting the research:	Edita Petrylaite, PhD researcher
Programme of study:	PhD
Address of the researcher for correspondence:	Newcastle Business School Northumbria University Newcastle Tyne and Wear United Kingdom
Telephone:	
E-mail:	
Description of the broad nature of the research:	This study aims to investigate current perceptions of masculinity and the key reasons of a male consumer's interest in spa and other services that are known for properties enhancing one's physical appearance and wellness.
Description of the involvement expected of participants including the broad nature of questions to be answered or events to be observed or activities to be undertaken, and the expected time commitment:	<p><b>Stage 1.</b></p> <p>The male research participants will be asked to participate in in-depth interviews and provide their reasoning for selecting spa and other beauty services, express their views about the current perception of masculinity and its influence on men's consumption demeanour.</p> <p>Prior to the interviews, the prospective participants will be informed that they have a right to refuse to answer certain questions, if that makes them uncomfortable, or completely withdraw from the research if they wish to do so.</p> <p>Interviews will be recorded using a digital voice recorder and then transcribed. Field</p>



	<p>notes will be taken to gather men's views on masculinity and their consumption habits.</p> <p><b>Stage 2.</b> The male research participants will be approached later via email correspondence or telephone to check the accuracy of the transcribed data and its interpretation.</p> <p><b>Stage 3.</b> Interviews for theory development will be conducted only with those research participants who will have given their consent after the initial interview and who would be able to provide more information to support or complement a theory.</p> <p><b>Time and location</b> It is expected that in-depth interviews will take approx.30-60 min. on the premises of the specific spa business, with the written permission of a business owner or a management team. Re-interviews for theory development purpose will be conducted in spas or other public and secure places during the day hours if agreed by both the researcher and the research participant. The researcher's supervision team and the business management will be informed about the time and place of the interviews to ensure the researchers safety. If a secure location is not agreed then, as an alternative to face-to-face interviews, data will be gathered by conducting phone interviews.</p> <p><b>Anonymity and confidentiality</b> The research participants' anonymity and confidentiality will be assured throughout all research stages. Quiet places or rooms will be selected if possible to ensure privacy and anonymity of the male respondents. This will also guarantee confidentiality of their shared information. Secondly, the interviewees' identity, names and places mentioned during the interviews will not be revealed and will not appear in any text. Recorded interviews will be transcribed and kept securely on computers and in locked cabinets at the Newcastle Business School.</p> <p><b>Further use of data</b></p>
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	<p>The data gathered will later be used for publication purposes in academic journals, conferences and other appropriate public events.</p> <p>Disposal of data At the end of the project, records will be disposed of securely (electronic copies deleted and hard copies shredded) or, where required, retained in accordance to the University data retention guidance.</p>
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Information obtained in this study, including this consent form, will be kept strictly confidential (i.e. will not be passed to others) and anonymous (i.e. individuals and organisations will not be identified *unless this is expressly excluded in the details given above*).

Data obtained through this research may be reproduced and published in a variety of forms and for a variety of audiences related to the broad nature of the research detailed above. It will not be used for purposes other than those outlined above without your permission.

Participation is entirely voluntary and participants may withdraw at any time.

**By signing this consent form, you are indicating that you fully understand the above information and agree to participate in this study on the basis of the above information.**

**Participant's signature:**

**Date:**

**Student's signature:**

**Date:**

**Please keep one copy of this form for your own records**

## Appendix J: Categories from interviews No. 2 – No. 9

Interview No.	Number of categories	Categories
2 and 3 (due to similarity in responses)	17	Acceptable behaviour; Association; Attitude; Benefits; <b>Men's behaviour</b> ; Reasons; Changes; Indifference; Macho activities; Masculinity; Men's beauty practices; Self-neglect; Spa activities; Spas; Typical activities; Unacceptable behaviour; Younger men's behaviour.
4.	16	Association; Balance; Benefits; <b>Men's behaviour</b> ; Changes; Compensation; Culture; Escapism; Loyalty; Masculinity; Media influences; Men's beauty practices; Spa activities; Spa companions; Spas; Unpractised behaviour.
5.	12	Attitude; Benefits; <b>Men's behaviour</b> ; Changes; Denial; Experience; Masculinity; Men's beauty practices; Pressure; Spa activities; Spa users; Spas.
6.	12	Attitude; <b>Men's behaviour</b> ; Changes; Culture; Masculinity; Media influence; Men's beauty practices; Pressure; Spa activities; Spa companions; Spa users; Spas.
7.	13	Benefits; <b>Men's behaviour</b> ; Changes; Denial; Loyalty; Masculinity; Men's beauty practices; Metrosexuality; Requirements; Spa activities; Spa companions; Spa users; Spas.
8.	9	<b>Men's behaviour</b> ; Changes; Masculinity; Men's beauty practices; Pressure; Spa activities; Spa companions; Spa users; Spas.
9.	9	Benefits; <b>Men's behaviour</b> ; Changes; Men's beauty practices; Metrosexuality; Spa activities; Spa companions; Spa users; Spas.

## Appendix K: Open coding categories, subcategories, properties and dimensions

Open coding categories and their subcategories	Conditions	Actions/ interactions	Consequences	Properties	Dimensions
<b>I. Men's behaviour</b>					
Younger men's behaviour	<u>Social pressure</u> <u>Media</u> Role models	Body aestheticisation	Association – metrosexuality, Association with gay Celebrity syndrome	Location Delivery Consumption direction	Home Beauty/spa places Men themselves Professional staff Self-centred Socially centred
Men's typical activities	<u>Sociocultural norms</u>  <u>Media</u> Promoting men's general awareness around fitness and wellbeing	Public activities		Time	<u>Past time</u> Dressy activities (sport, shopping for clothes, pubs and restaurants) Undressy activities (swimming and sunbathing) <u>Present time</u> Dressy activities (sport, work, pub)
Spa activities				Available services Level of experience	<u>In-depth experience</u> Swimming pool, Jacuzzi, sauna,

				<p>Favourite activity Massage</p> <p>Sauna, Jacuzzi and steam rooms</p>	<p>steam rooms, massage, beauty treatments (i.e. facials, waxing, manicure and pedicure)</p> <p><u>Limited experience</u> (massage, facials)</p> <p><u>No experience</u> (beauty treatments)</p> <p><u>Hedonic motivation</u> Escape from stress Escape from mundane reality</p> <p><u>Frequency of purchasing</u> Regularly A few times a year</p> <p><u>Motivation</u> Relaxation Free availability</p>
<p>Unacceptable/ unpractised behaviour</p> <p>(Spa and prettification)</p>	<p>Prudishness Association with gay Ridicule</p>			<p>Level of unacceptance</p> <p>Sources</p>	<p>Strong Slight</p> <p>Society Interviewed individuals</p>
<p>Acceptable behaviour</p> <p>Spa</p>	<p>Secret</p>		<p><u>Social stigma</u> (Ridicule and association with gay)</p>	<p>Type of consumption</p>	<p>Heterosocial Monosocial Homosocial consumption under specific conditions (Commonality, friendly relationship, spa location)</p>

				By-product	Hotel (travelling for work reasons, travelling for leisure) Gym Occasion (wedding, birthday, anniversaries)
Masculinity	Freedom of behaviour  Gender convergence			Stability  Changing perception of masculinity  <u>Men's qualities</u> Desirable masculine traits	Gender convergence, reduced peer pressure for machismo, increased involvement in physical activities, attention to physical appearance, body beautification  <u>Qualities of mind</u> (smart, decision maker, risk taker), <u>Inner qualities</u> (polite, courteous, considerate, caring, responsible, integral, reliable and honest) <u>Traits of physical appearance</u> (clean, fit, strong, well-presented, attention to physical appearance(self-centred and socially centred)). <u>Desirable masculine physique</u> (slim and fit) <u>Male gender performativity</u> (breadwinning, protecting, controlling, parenting, being active and hardworking)

				Undesirable traits	Femininity, dishonesty, irresponsibility, laziness, over worry, vanity and carelessness <u>Undesirable masculine physique</u> (skinny, extremely muscular, overweight)
				Types of masculinity	Chauvinistic, ideal masculinity, macho metrosexual and hegemonic masculinity
Attitude		Rejection Unmanly (feminine, homosexual)		Attitude towards beautifying men	Younger generation – Positive (acceptance) Older generation - Negative (ridicule, association with gay, unmanly)
				Attitude towards beauty practices	Negative (unmanly, vanity, homosexual, untypical)
<b>II. Culture</b>  <i>Regional culture</i> The South  The North East	Diversity; Freedom of behaviour  Freedom of behaviour  Stagnation in gender norms	Acceptance of spas and beautification  Compliance with gender norms  Gendered consumption	Social stigma (ridicule, association with gay)		
<b>III. Social pressure</b>				Awareness of social pressure	Social institutions Media, society, work

				environment, family  <u>Media's influence</u> Shaping the perception of masculinity; Promoting interest in enhancing one's physical appearance.  Rejecting social influence Self-pressure  <u>Reasons of self-pressure</u> Enhance physical appearance; Attract the opposite sex  Past Present
IV. Spa perception			Romanticism	Evaluation  The view of participants        The view of society
				Positive Negative  <u>Direction of consumption</u> Self-centred (monosocial type of consumption) Social centred (heterosocial type of consumption)  <u>Type of product</u> feminine product; healthy activity.  British (feminine product, Foreign (healthy and luxurious activity)



				Time Social institutions	Past Media, school, community, sport and work environment.
<b>V. Changes</b>					
Perception of masculinity	<i>Social pressure</i> to be a macho man  Less pressure to be a macho man			Time	Past  Present
Men's consumption of spas/beauty practices	Feminine activity Media	Rejection  Growing acceptance of spas		Time  Level Healthy lifestyle	Past Work, sport, pubs  Dramatic  Present Gym, spa, reduced alcohol consumption
Men's lifestyle	<u>Media</u> Promoting body beautification, Promoting fitness and wellbeing	Growing interest in grooming	Celebrity syndrome	Reasons	To attract the opposite sex General awareness of fitness and wellbeing
No changes	Stagnation in gender norms				

## Appendix L: Axial coding subsuming open coding categories under higher level categories

Open coding categories and their subcategories, properties and dimensions	Axial coding: Stage 1 (Open coding categories subsumed under higher level categories)	Axial coding: Stage 2 (Grouping categories based on their relationship)
<p><b>Men's behaviour</b></p> <p><i><b>Younger men's behaviour</b></i>  Social pressure; Media; Role models; Body aestheticisation; Consumption direction - Self-centred, Socially centred;  Location – Home, Beauty/spa places;  Delivery - Men themselves, Professional staff; Celebrity syndrome;  Association – metrosexuality, association with gay;</p> <p><i><b>Men's typical activities</b></i>  Sociocultural norms; Media - Promoting men's general awareness around fitness and wellbeing;  Public activities; Time - Past time (Dressy activities: sport, shopping for clothes, pubs and restaurants; Undressy activities: swimming and sunbathing); Present time (Dressy activities: sport, work, pub)</p> <p><i><b>Spa activities</b></i>  Available services;  Level of experience –  In-depth experience (Swimming pool, Jacuzzi, sauna,</p>	<p><b>Media</b> – condition  Body aestheticisation – action/interaction  Type of influence of role models –  Promoting body beautification  Promoting fitness and wellbeing  Consumption direction – action/interaction  Celebrity syndrome – consequence  Association with metrosexuals - consequence  Association with gay - consequence</p> <p>Sociocultural norms, Media – conditions  Promoting men's general awareness around fitness and wellbeing – influence  Men's typical activities - action/interaction  Public activities – action/interaction</p> <p><b>Limited acceptance of spa</b> -  action/interaction  Spa perception –  1. By-product:</p>	<p><b>Mass Media</b> - macro condition  Body aestheticization (impact)  Promoting body beautification (influence)  Promoting fitness and wellbeing (influence)  Celebrity syndrome - consequence</p> <p><b>Male spa consumers in dissonance</b> –  action/interaction  <i>Limited acceptance of spa:</i>  <i>By-product:</i></p>

<p>steam rooms, massage, beauty treatments);  Limited experience_(massage, facials);  No experience (beauty treatments);  Motivation (Relaxation, Free availability);  Favourite activity – Massage; Sauna, Jacuzzi and steam rooms;  Hedonic motivation (Escape from stress , Escape from mundane reality);  Frequency of purchasing (regularly, a few times a year);</p> <p><b>Unacceptable/unpractised behaviour</b>  Spa, pretification; Prudishness; Association with gay; Level of unacceptance – strong, slight; Source - society, interviewed individuals;</p> <p><b>Acceptable behaviour</b>  Spa; Secret; Social stigma - Ridicule and association with gay;  Type of consumption – Heterosocial consumption, Monosocial consumption, Homosocial consumption under specific conditions (Commonality, friendly relationship, spa location);  By-product – Gym, Hotel , Occasion (wedding, birthday, anniversaries);</p> <p><b>Masculinity</b>  Freedom of behaviour; Gender convergence; Stability;  <u>Changing perception of masculinity</u> - Gender convergence,</p>	<p>A) By-product of gym  B) By-product of hotel (travelling for work reasons, travelling for leisure)  Reasons for using:  Escapism from physical stagnation  Escapism from stress  Escapism from mundane reality</p> <p>C) By-product of occasion (wedding, birthday, anniversaries)</p> <p>Spa, pretification – feminine activity  Social stigma (Ridicule and Association with gay) – consequence</p> <p>2. Primary product under specific conditions:  Secret – condition  Social stigma ( Ridicule and Association with gay) – consequence</p> <p>Type of consumption:  Monosocial, Heterosocial, Homosocial under specific conditions)</p>	<p><i>By-product of gym</i>  Escapism from physical stagnation  Balanced-self - consequence</p> <p><i>By-product of hotel</i> (travelling for work reasons and travelling for leisure)  Escapism from stress  Escapism from mundane reality  Monosocial consumption  Heterosocial consumption  Romanticism – consequence</p> <p><i>By-product of occasion</i> (wedding, birthday, anniversaries)  Heterosocial consumption  Monosocial consumption</p> <p><i>Primary product under specific conditions:</i>  Heterosocial consumption  Homosocial consumption under specific conditions:  Friendly relationship  Commonality (Sexual orientation, Interest in going to spas)  Type of a spa</p> <p><b>Conflicted masculinities</b> - consequence</p>
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<p><b>Culture</b></p> <p>Regional culture The South – Diversity, Freedom of behaviour; Acceptance of spas and beautification</p> <p>The North East - Freedom of behaviour, Stagnation in gender norms; Compliance with gender norms, Gendered consumption; Social stigma - ridicule, association with gay;</p>	<p><b>Sociocultural norms</b> – conditions Regional sociocultural norms - conditions The South: Diversity - conditions Freedom of behaviour – conditions Acceptance of spas - consequence</p> <p>The North East: Freedom of behaviour - conditions Gender convergence - condition Stagnation in gender norms – micro condition Compliance with cultural norms – action/interaction Gendered consumption (spa – feminine activity) – action/interaction</p> <p>British Culture - conditions Prudishness - conditions Social stigma (Ridicule and association with gay) – consequence</p>	<p><b>Sociocultural norms</b></p> <p><i>Regional sociocultural norms</i> The South – Freedom of behaviour Diversity</p> <p>The North East - Freedom of behaviour Gender convergence Stagnation in gender norms Compliance with cultural norms</p> <p>Gendered consumption Men's typical activities Women's activities</p> <p>British Culture Prudishness Social stigma</p>
<p><b>Social pressure</b></p> <p>Awareness of social pressure: Social institutions (Media, society, work environment, family); Media's influence (Shaping the perception of masculinity, Promoting interest in enhancing one's physical appearance);</p>	<p><b>Social pressure</b></p> <p>Awareness of social pressure Social institutions (Media and sociocultural norms) Media – condition Body aestheticisation Promoting body beautification</p>	<p><b>Social pressure</b></p> <p>Social institutions Awareness of social pressure Denial of social pressure Self-pressure</p>

<p>Sociocultural norms' influence – gendered consumption Denial of social pressure - Rejecting social influence, Self-pressure; Self-pressure: Reasons of self-pressure (Enhance physical appearance; Attract the opposite sex) Time - Present, Past;</p>	<p>Sociocultural norms – condition Gendered consumption Denial of social pressure Self-pressure</p>	
<p><b>Spa perception</b></p> <p>Romanticism; Evaluation - Positive, Negative; The view of participants Direction of consumption: Self-centred (monosocial type of consumption), Socially-centred (heterosocial type of consumption) Type of product - feminine product; healthy activity.</p> <p>The view of society - British (feminine product), Foreign (healthy and luxurious activity); Time – Past Social institutions - Media, school, community, sport and work environment.</p>	<p>Romanticism – consequence Gendered consumption Spa – feminine activity Monosocial consumption Heterosocial consumption</p> <p>British culture Spa – feminine product</p> <p>Media – condition</p>	
<p><b>Changes</b></p> <p>Perception of masculinity; <i>Social pressure</i> to be a macho man; Less pressure to be a macho man; Time – Past, Present; Men's consumption of spas/beauty practices - Feminine activity (Rejection), Time – Past (Work, sport, pubs); Media; Growing acceptance of spas; Level (dramatic); Healthy lifestyle;</p>	<p>Social pressure Spa- feminine activity Beautification- feminine activity Women's activities Social stigma Men's typical activities (work, sports, pubs, gym)</p>	

Present Time (Gym, spa, reduced alcohol consumption); Reasons (To attract the opposite sex; General awareness of fitness and wellbeing) Men's lifestyle Media - Promoting body beautification, Promoting fitness and wellbeing; Growing interest in grooming; Syndrome of celebrity; No changes Stagnation in gender norms	Media –condition Body aestheticisation: Promoting general awareness of fitness and wellbeing Promoting body beautification  Celebrity syndrome – consequence Stagnation in gender norms	
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## Appendix M: Axial categories, their roles and subcategories

Main categories (Axial coding)	Role of category	Subcategories
Social pressure	Phenomenon	Awareness of social pressure Social institutions Denial of social pressure Self-pressure
Sociocultural norms	Macro condition	Regional sociocultural norms Stagnation in gender norms Compliance with cultural norms Gender convergence Freedom of behaviour Gendered consumption Men's typical activities Women's activities Diversity Freedom of behaviour British Culture Prudishness Social stigma
Mass media	Macro condition	Body aestheticization Promoting body beautification Promoting fitness and wellbeing Celebrity syndrome
Male spa consumers in dissonance	Action/ interaction	<i>Limited acceptance of spa</i> <i>By-product</i> By-product of gym Escapism from physical stagnation Balanced-self By-product of hotel Monosocial consumption <i>Primary product under specific conditions</i> Heterosocial consumption Homosocial consumption Type of a spa Commonality Sexual orientation Interest in going to spas Friendly relationship
Conflicted masculinities	Consequence	



## Appendix N: Categories and subcategories of dissonance

Male spa consumers in dissonance	Subcategories
Intimidating	
Uncomfortable	
Embarrassing	
Masking femininity	Different wording
	Grooming at home
	Rejecting beauty treatments
	Using spa as a by-product
Secret	Not sharing experiences with others
	Revealing experiences to certain people
	Conflict between what information to share
	Grooming at home
Unknown territory	Anxiety
	Apprehension
Conflict between individual preferences and sociocultural norms	
Concern about possible attitude	